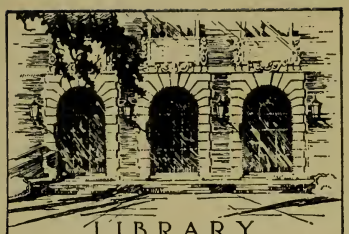

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THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

VOL. II.

THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

BY

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"DAVID ELGINBROD," "ROBERT FALCONER,"
"ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1877.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

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THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO DAIMONS.

THINGS had taken a turn that was not to Malcolm's satisfaction, and his thoughts were as busy all the way home as Kelpie would allow. He had ardently desired that his sister should be thoroughly in love with Lenorme, for that seemed to open a clear path out of his worst difficulties; now they had quarrelled; and besides were both angry with him. The main fear was that Liftore would now make some progress with her. Things looked dangerous. Even his warning against Caley had led to a result the very opposite of his intent and desire.

And now it recurred to him that he had once come upon Liftore talking to Caley, and giving her something that shone like a sovereign.

Earlier on the same morning of her visit to the studio, Florimel had awaked and found herself in the presence of the spiritual Vehmgericht. Every member of the tribunal seemed against her. All her thoughts were busy accusing, none of them excusing one another. So hard were they upon her that she fancied she had nearly come to the conclusion that, if only she could do it pleasantly, without pain or fear, the best thing would be to swallow something, and fall asleep; for like most people she was practically an atheist, and therefore always thought of death as the refuge from the ills of life. But although she was often very uncomfortable, Florimel knew nothing of such genuine downright misery as drives some people to what can be no more to their purpose than if a man should strip himself naked because he is cold. When she returned from her unhappy visit, and had sent her attendant to get her some tea, she threw herself upon her bed, and found herself yet again in the dark chambers of the

spiritual police. But already even their company was preferable to that of Caley, whose officiousness began to enrage her. She was yet tossing in the Nessus-tunic of her own disharmony, when Malcolm came for orders. To get rid of herself and Caley both, she desired him to bring the horses round at once.

It was more than Malcolm had expected. He ran: he might yet have a chance of trying to turn her in the right direction. He knew that Liftore was neither in the house nor at the stable. With the help of the earl's groom, he was round in ten minutes. Florimel was all but ready: like some other ladies she could dress quickly when she had good reason. She sprang from Malcolm's hand to the saddle, and led as straight northward as she could go, never looking behind her till she drew rein on the top of Hampstead Heath. When he rode up to her, "Malcolm," she said, looking at him half-ashamed, "I don't think my father *would* have minded your wearing his clothes."

"Thank you, my lady," said Malcolm. "At least he would have forgiven anything meant for your pleasure."

"I was too hasty," she said. "But the fact was, Mr. Lenorme had irritated me, and I foolishly mixed you up with him."

"When I went into the studio, after you left it, this morning, my lady," Malcolm ventured, "he had his head between his hands and would not even look at me."

Florimel turned her face aside, and Malcolm thought she was sorry; but she was only hiding a smile: she had not yet got beyond the kitten-stage of love, and was pleased to find she gave pain.

"If your ladyship never had another true friend, Mr. Lenorme is one," added Malcolm.

"What opportunity can you have had for knowing?" said Florimel.

"I have been sitting to him every morning for a good many days," answered Malcolm. "*He* is something like a man!"

Florimel's face flushed with pleasure. She liked to hear him praised, for he loved her.

"You should have seen, my lady, the pains he took with that portrait! He would stare at the little picture you lent him of my lord for

minutes, as if he were looking through it at something behind it; then he would get up and go and gaze at your ladyship on the pedestal, as if you were the goddess herself, able to tell him everything about your father; and then he would hurry back to his easel, and give a touch or two to the face, looking at it all the time as if he loved it. It must have been a cruel pain that drove him to smear it as he did!"

Florimel began to feel a little motion of shame somewhere in the mystery of her being. But to show that to her servant, would be to betray herself—the more that he seemed the painter's friend.

"I will ask Lord Liftore to go and see the portrait, and if he thinks it like, I will buy it," she said. "Mr. Lenorme is certainly very clever with his brush."

Malcolm saw that she said this not to insult Lenorme, but to blind her groom, and made no answer.

"I will ride there with you to-morrow morning," she added in conclusion, and moved on.

Malcolm touched his hat, and dropped behind. But the next moment he was by her side again.

"I beg your pardon, my lady, but would you allow me to say one word more?"

She bowed her head.

"That woman Caley, I am certain, is not to be trusted. She does not love you, my lady."

"How do you know that?" asked Forimel, speaking steadily, but writhing inwardly with the knowledge that the warning was too late.

"I have tried her spirit," answered Malcolm, "and know that it is of the devil. She loves herself too much to be true."

After a little pause Florimel said,

"I know you mean well, Malcolm; but it is nothing to me whether she loves me or not. We don't look for that now-a-days from servants."

"It is because I love you, my lady," said Malcolm, "that I know Caley does not. If she should get hold of anything your ladyship would not wish talked about,—"

"That she cannot," said Florimel, but with

an inward shudder. "She may tell the whole world all she can discover."

She would have cantered on as the words left her lips, but something in Malcolm's look held her. She turned pale; she trembled: her father was looking at her as only once had she seen him—in doubt whether his child lied. The illusion was terrible. She shook in her saddle. The next moment she was galloping along the grassy border of the heath in wild flight from her worst enemy, whom yet she could never by the wildest of flights escape; for when, coming a little to herself as she approached a sand-pit, she pulled up, there was her enemy—neither before nor behind, neither above nor beneath nor within her: it was the self which had just told a lie to the servant of whom she had so lately boasted that he never told one in his life. Then she grew angry. What had she done to be thus tormented? *She* a marchioness, thus pestered by her own menials—pulled in opposing directions by a groom and a maid! She would turn them both away, and have nobody about her, either to trust or suspect.

She might have called them her good and her

evil demon; for she knew, that is, she had it somewhere about her, but did not look it out, that it was her own cowardice and concealment, her own falseness to the traditional, never-failing courage of her house, her ignobility, and unfitness to represent the Colonsays, —her double dealing in short, that had made the marchioness in her own right the slave of her woman, the rebuked of her groom!

She turned and rode back, looking the other way as she passed Malcolm.

When they reached the top of the heath, riding along to meet them came Liftore—this time to Florimel's consolation and comfort: she did not like riding unprotected with a good angel at her heels. So glad was she that she did not even take the trouble to wonder how he had discovered the road she went. She never suspected that Caley had sent his lordship's groom to follow her until the direction of her ride should be evident, but took his appearance without question, as a loverlike attention, and rode home with him, talking the whole way, and cherishing a feeling of triumph over both Malcolm and Lenorme. Had she not

a protector of her own kind? Could she not, when they troubled her, pass from their sphere into one beyond their ken? For the poor moment, the weak lord who rode beside her seemed to her foolish heart a tower of refuge. She was particularly gracious to her tower as they rode, and fancied again and again that perhaps the best way out of her troubles would be to encourage and at last accept him, so getting rid of honeyed delights and rankling stings together, of good and evil angels and low-bred lover at one sweep. Quiet would console for dulness, innocence for weariness. She would fain have a good conscience toward Society—that image whose feet are of gold and its head a bag of chaff and sawdust.

Malcolm followed sick at heart that she should prove herself so shallow. Riding Honour, he had plenty of leisure to brood.

CHAPTER II.

A CHASTISEMENT.

WHEN she went to her room, there was Caley taking from a portmanteau the highland dress which had occasioned so much. A note fell, and she handed it to her mistress. Florimel opened it, grew pale as she read it, and asked Caley to bring her a glass of water. No sooner had her maid left the room than she sprang to the door and bolted it. Then the tears burst from her eyes, she sobbed despairingly, and but for the help of her handkerchief would have wailed aloud. When Caley returned, she answered to her knock that she was lying down, and wanted to sleep. She was, however, trying to force further communication from the note. In it the painter told her that he was going to set out the next

morning for Italy, and that her portrait was at the shop of certain carvers and gilders, being fitted with a frame for which he had made drawings. Three times she read it, searching for some hidden message to her heart; she held it up between her and the light; then before the fire till it crackled like a bit of old parchment; but all was in vain: by no device, intellectual or physical, could she coax the shadow of a meaning out of it, beyond what lay plain on the surface. She must, she *would* see him again.

That night she was merrier than usual at dinner; after it, sang ballad upon ballad to please Liftore; then went to her room and told Caley to arrange for yet a visit, the next morning, to Mr. Lenorme's studio. She positively must, she said, secure her father's portrait ere the ill-tempered painter—all men of genius were hasty and unreasonable—should have destroyed it utterly, as he was certain to do before leaving—and with that she showed her Lenorme's letter. Caley was all service, only said that this time she thought they had better go openly. She would see Lady Bellair as soon

as Lady Lossie was in bed, and explain the thing to her.

The next morning therefore they drove to Chelsea in the carriage. When the door opened, Florimel walked straight up to the study. There she saw no one, and her heart, which had been fluttering strangely, sank, and was painfully still, while her gaze went wandering about the room. It fell upon the pictured temple of Isis: a thick dark veil had fallen and shrouded the whole figure of the goddess, leaving only the outline; and the form of the worshipping youth had vanished utterly: where he had stood, the tesselated pavement, with the serpent of life twining through it, and the sculptured walls of the temple, shone out clear and bare, as if Hyacinth had walked out into the desert to return no more. Again the tears gushed from the heart of Florimel: she had sinned against her own fame—had blotted out a fair memorial record that might have outlasted the knight of stone under the Norman canopy in Lossie church. Again she sobbed, again she choked down a cry that had else become a scream.

Arms were around her. Never doubting whose the embrace, she leaned her head against his bosom, stayed her sobs with the one word "*Cruel!*" and slowly opening her tearful eyes, lifted them to the face that bent over hers. It was Liftore's. She was dumb with disappointment and dismay. It was a hateful moment. He kissed her forehead and eyes, and sought her mouth. She shrieked aloud. In her very agony at the loss of one to be kissed by another!—and there! It was too degrading! too horrid!

At the sound of her cry some one started up at the other end of the room. An easel with a large canvas on it fell, and a man came forward with great strides. Liftore let her go, with a muttered curse on the intruder, and she darted from the room into the arms of Caley, who had had her ear against the other side of the door. The same instant Malcolm received from his lordship a well planted blow between the eyes, which filled them with flashes and darkness. The next, the earl was on the floor. The ancient fury of the Celt had burst up into the nineteenth century, and mastered a noble spirit.

All Malcolm could afterwards remember was that he came to himself dealing Liftore merciless blows, his foot on his back, and his weapon the earl's whip. His lordship, struggling to rise, turned up a face white with hate and impotent fury.

"You damned flunkie!" he panted. "I'll have you shot like a mangy dog."

"Meanwhile I will chastise you like an insolent nobleman," said Malcolm, who had already almost recovered his self-possession. "You dare to touch my mistress!"

And with the words he gave him one more stinging cut with the whip.

"Stand off, and let it be man to man," cried Liftore, with a fierce oath, clenching his teeth in agony and rage.

"That it cannot be, my lord; but I have had enough, and so I hope has your lordship," said Malcolm; and as he spoke he threw the whip to the other end of the room, and stood back. Liftore sprang to his feet, and rushed at him. Malcolm caught him by the wrist with a fisherman's grasp.

"My lord, I don't want to kill you. Take a

warning, and let ill be, for fear of worse," he said, and threw his hand from him with a swing that nearly dislocated his shoulder.

The warning sufficed. His lordship cast him one scowl of concentrated hate and revenge, and leaving the room, hurried also from the house.

At the usual morning hour, Malcolm had ridden to Chelsea, hoping to find his friend in a less despairing and more companionable mood than when he left him. To his surprise and disappointment he learned that Lenorme had sailed by the packet to Ostend the night before. He asked leave to go into the study. There on its easel stood the portrait of his father as he had last seen it—disfigured with a great smear of brown paint across the face. He knew that the face was dry, and he saw that the smear was wet: he would see whether he could not, with turpentine and a soft brush, remove the insult. In this endeavour he was so absorbed, and by the picture itself was so divided from the rest of the room, that he neither saw nor heard anything until Florimel cried out.

Naturally, those events made him yet more

dissatisfied with his sister's position. Evil influences and dangers were on all sides of her—the worst possible outcome being that, loving one man, she should marry another, and him such a man as Liftore. Whatever he heard in the servants' hall, both tone and substance, only confirmed the unfavourable impression he had had from the first of the bold-faced countess. The oldest of her servants had, he found, the least respect for their mistress, although all had a certain liking for her, which gave their disrespect the heavier import. He *must* get Florimel away somehow. While all was right between her and the painter he had been less anxious about her immediate surroundings, trusting that Lenorme would ere long deliver her. But now she had driven him from the very country, and he had left no clue to follow him up by. His housekeeper conld tell nothing of his purposes. The gardener and she were left in charge as a matter of course. He might be back in a week, or a year; she could not even conjecture.

Seeming possibilities, in varied mingling with rank absurdities, kept passing through Mal-

colm's mind, as, after Liftore's punishment, he lifted the portrait, set it again upon its easel, and went on trying to clean the face of it—with no small promise of success. But as he made progress he grew anxious—lest, with the defilement, he should remove some of the colour as well: the painter alone, he concluded at length, could be trusted to restore the work he had ruined.

He left the house, walked across the road to the river-bank, and gave a short sharp whistle. In an instant Davy was in the dinghy, pulling for the shore. Malcolm went on board the yacht, saw that all was right, gave some orders, went ashore again, and mounted Kelpie.

CHAPTER III.

LIES.

IN pain, wrath, and mortification, Liftore rode home. What would the men at his club say if they knew that he had been thrashed by a scoundrel of a groom for kissing his mistress? The fact would soon be out: he must do his best to have it taken for what it ought to be, namely, fiction. It was the harder upon him that he knew himself no coward. He must punish the rascal somehow—he owed it to society to punish him: but at present he did not see how, and the first thing was to have the first word with Florimel; he must see her before she saw the ruffian. He rode as hard as he dared to Curzon Street, sent his groom to the stables, telling him he should want the horses again before lunch, had a hot bath, of

which he stood in dire need, and some brandy with his breakfast, and then, all unfit for exercise as he was, walked to Portland Place.

Mistress and maid rode home together in silence. The moment Florimel heard Malcolm's voice she had left the house. Caley following had heard enough to know that there was a scuffle at least going on in the study, and her eye witnessed against her heart that Liftore could have no chance with the detested groom if the respect of the latter gave way: would MacPhail thrash his lordship? If he did, it would be well she should know it. In the hoped event of his lordship's marrying her mistress, it was desirable, not only that she should be in favour with both of them, but that she should have some hold upon each of a more certainly enduring nature: if she held secrets with husband and wife separately, she would be in clover for the period of her natural existence.

As to Florimel, she was enraged at the liberties Liftore had taken with her. But alas! was she not in some degree in his power? He had found her there, and in tears!—How did he come to be there? If Malcolm's judg-

ment of her was correct, Caley might have told him. Was she already false?—She pondered within herself, and cast no look upon her maid until she had concluded how best to carry herself towards the earl. Then glancing at the hooded cobra beside her,

"What an awkward thing that Lord Liftore, of all moments, should appear just then!" she said. "How could it be?"

"I'm sure I haven't an idea, my lady," returned Caley. "My lord has always been kind to Mr. Lenorme, and I suppose he has been in the way of going to see him at work. Who would have thought my lord had been such an early riser! There are not many gentlemen like him now-a-days, my lady!—Did your ladyship hear the noise in the studio after you left it?"

"I heard high words," answered her mistress, "—nothing more. How on earth did MacPhail come to be there as well?—From you, Caley, I will not conceal that his lordship behaved indiscreetly; in fact he was rude; and I can quite imagine that MacPhail thought it his duty to defend me. It is all very awkward for me. Who could have imagined *him* there, and

sitting behind amongst the pictures! It almost makes me doubt whether Mr. Lenorme be really gone."

"It seems to me, my lady," returned Caley, "that the man is always just where he ought not to be, always meddling with something he has no business with. I beg your pardon, my lady," she went on, "but wouldn't it be better to get some staid elderly man for a groom, one who has been properly bred up to his duties and taught his manners in a gentleman's stable? It is so odd to have a groom from a rough seafaring set—one who behaves like the rude fisherman he is, never having had to obey orders of lord or lady! The worst of it is, your ladyship will soon be the town's talk if you have such a groom on such a horse after you everywhere."

Florimel's face flushed. Caley saw she was angry, and held her peace.

Breakfast was hardly over, when Liftore walked in, looking pale, and, in spite of his faultless *get-up*, somewhat disreputable; for shame, secret pain, and anger do not favour a good carriage or honest mien. Florimel threw

herself back in her chair—an action characteristic of the bold-faced countess, and held out her left hand to him in an expansive, benevolent sort of way.

"How dare you come into my presence, looking so well-pleased with yourself, my lord, after giving me such a fright this morning?" she said. "You might at least have made sure that there was—that we were——" She could not bring herself to complete the sentence.

"My dearest girl!" said his lordship, not only delighted to get off so pleasantly, but profoundly flattered by the implied understanding, "I found you in tears, and how could I think of anything else? It may have been stupid, but I trust you will think it pardonable."

Caley had not fully betrayed her mistress to his lordship, and he had, entirely to his own satisfaction, explained the liking of Florimel for the society of the painter as the mere fancy of a girl for the admiration of one whose employment, although nothing above the servile, yet gave him a claim something beyond that of a milliner or hair-dresser, to be considered a judge

in matters of appearance. As to anything more in the affair—and with *him* in the field—of such a notion he was simply incapable: he could not have wronged the lady he meant to honour with his hand, by regarding it as within the bounds of the possible.

"It was no wonder I was crying," said Florimel. "A seraph would have cried to see the state my father's portrait was in."

"Your father's portrait!"

"Yes. Did not you know? Mr. Lenorme has been painting one from a miniature I lent him—under my supervision, of course; and just because I let fall a word that showed I was not altogether satisfied with the likeness, what should the wretched man do but catch up a brush full of filthy black paint, and smudge the face all over!"

"Oh, Lenorme will soon set it to rights again. He's not a bad fellow though he does belong to the *genus irritabile*. I will go about it this very day."

"You'll not find him, I'm sorry to say. There's a note I had from him yesterday. And the picture's quite unfit to be seen—utterly

ruined. But I *can't* think how you could miss it!"

"To tell you the truth, Florimel, I had a bit of a scrimmage after you left me in the studio." Here his lordship did his best to imitate a laugh. "Who should come rushing upon me out of the back regions of paint and canvas but that mad groom of yours! I don't suppose you knew he was there?"

"Not I. I saw a man's feet—that was all."

"Well, there he was, for what reason the devil knows, perdu amongst the painter's litter; and when he heard your little startled cry—most musical, most melancholy—what should he fancy but that you were frightened, and he must rush to the rescue! And so he did with a vengeance: I don't know when I shall quite forget the blow he gave me." And again Liftore laughed, or thought he did.

"He struck you!" exclaimed Florimel, rather astonished, but hardly able for inward satisfaction to put enough of indignation into her tone.

"He did, the fellow!—But don't say a word about it, for I thrashed him so unmercifully

that, to tell the truth, I had to stop because I grew sorry for him. I am sorry now. So I hope you will take no notice of it. In fact, I begin to like the rascal: you know I was never favourably impressed with him. By Jove! it is not every mistress that can have such a devoted attendant. I only hope his over-zeal in your service may never get you into some compromising position. He is hardly, with all his virtues, the proper servant for a young lady to have about her; he has had no training—no *proper* training at all, you see. But you must let the villain nurse himself for a day or two anyhow. It would be torture to make him ride, after what I gave him."

His lordship spoke feelingly, with heroic endurance indeed; and if Malcolm should dare give *his* account of the fracas, he trusted to the word of a gentleman to outweigh that of a groom.

Not all to whom it may seem incredible that a nobleman should thus lie, are themselves incapable of doing likewise. Any man may put himself in training for a liar by doing things he would be ashamed to have known. The art is

easily learned, and to practise it well is a great advantage to people with *designs*. Men of ability, indeed, if they take care not to try hard to speak the truth, will soon become able to lie as truthfully as any sneak that sells grease for butter to the poverty of the New Cut.

It is worth remarking to him who can from the lie factual carry his thought deeper to the lie essential, that all the power of a lie comes from the truth; it has none in itself. So strong is the truth that a mere resemblance to it is the source of strength to its opposite—until it be found that *like* is not *the same*.

Florimel had already made considerable progress in the art, but proficiency in lying does not always develop the power of detecting it. She knew that her father had on one occasion struck Malcolm, and that he had taken it with the utmost gentleness, confessing himself in the wrong. Also she had the impression that for a menial to lift his hand against a gentleman, even in self-defence, was a thing unheard of. The blow Malcolm had struck Liftore was for her, not himself. Therefore, while her confidence in Malcolm's courage and prowess remain-

ed unshaken, she was yet able to believe that Liftore had done as he said, and supposed that Malcolm had submitted. In her heart she pitied without despising him.

Caley herself took him the message that he would not be wanted. As she delivered it, she smiled an evil smile and dropped a mocking courtesy, with her gaze well fixed on his two black eyes and the great bruise between them.

When Liftore mounted to accompany Lady Lossie, it took all the pluck that belonged to his high breed to enable him to smile and smile, with twenty counsellors in different parts of his body feelingly persuading him that he was at least a liar. As they rode, Florimel asked him how he came to be at the studio that morning. He told her that he had wanted very much to see her portrait before the final touches were given it. He could have made certain suggestions, he believed, that no one else could. He had indeed, he confessed—and felt absolutely virtuous in doing so, because here he spoke a fact—heard from his aunt that Florimel was to be there that morning for the last time: it was therefore his only chance; but he had expected

to be there hours before she was out of bed. For the rest, he hoped he had been punished enough, seeing her rascally groom—and once more his lordship laughed peculiarly—had but just failed of breaking his arm; it was all he could do to hold the reins.

CHAPTER IV.

AN OLD ENEMY.

ONE Sunday evening—it must have been just while Malcolm and Blue Peter stood in the Strand listening to a voluntary that filled and overflowed an otherwise empty church—a short, stout, elderly woman was walking lightly along the pavement of a street of small houses, not far from a thoroughfare which, crowded like a market the night before, had now two lively borders only—of holiday-makers mingled with church-goers. The bells for evening prayers were ringing. The sun had vanished behind the smoke and steam of London; indeed he might have set—it was hard to say without consulting the almanac; but it was not dark yet. The lamps in the street were lighted, however, and also in the church she passed.

She carried a small bible in her hand, folded in a pocket-handkerchief, and looked a decent woman from the country. Her quest was a place where the minister said his prayers and did not read them out of a book: she had been brought up a presbyterian, and had prejudices in favour of what she took for the simpler form of worship. Nor had she gone much farther before she came upon a chapel which seemed to promise all she wanted. She entered, and a sad-looking woman showed her to a seat. She sat down square, fixing her eyes at once on the pulpit, rather dimly visible over many pews, as if it were one of the mountains that surrounded her Jerusalem. The place was but scantily lighted, for the community at present could ill afford to burn daylight. When the worship commenced, and the congregation rose to sing, she got up with a jerk that showed the duty as unwelcome as unexpected, but seemed by the way she settled herself in her seat for the prayer, already thereby reconciled to the differences between Scotch church-customs and English chapel-customs. She went to sleep softly, and woke warily as the prayer came to a close.

While the congregation again sang, the minister who had officiated hitherto left the pulpit, and another ascended to preach. When he began to read the text, the woman gave a little start, and leaning forward, peered very hard to gain a satisfactory sight of his face between the candles on each side of it, but without success: she soon gave up her attempted scrutiny, and thenceforward seemed to listen with marked attention. The sermon was a simple, earnest, at times impassioned appeal to the hearts and consciences of the congregation. There was little attempt in it at the communication of knowledge of any kind, but the most indifferent hearer must have been aware that the speaker was earnestly straining after something. To those who understood, it was as if he would force his way through every stockade of prejudice, ditch of habit, rampart of indifference, moat of sin, wall of stupidity, and curtain of ignorance, until he stood face to face with the conscience of his hearer.

"Rank Arminianism!" murmured the woman. "Whaur's the gospel o' that?" But still she listened with seeming intentness, while some-

thing of wonder mingled with the something else that set in motion every live wrinkle in her forehead, and made her eyebrows undulate like writhing snakes.

At length the preacher rose to eloquence, an eloquence inspired by the hunger of his soul after truth eternal, and the love he bore to his brethren who fed on husks—an eloquence innocent of the tricks of elocution or the arts of rhetoric: to have discovered himself using one of them would have sent him home to his knees in shame and fear—an eloquence not devoid of discords, the strings of his instrument being now slack with emotion, now tense with vision, yet even in those discords shrouding the essence of all harmony. When he ceased, the silence that followed seemed instinct with thought, with that speech of the spirit which no longer needs the articulating voice.

"It *canna* be the stickit minister!" said the woman to herself.

The congregation slowly dispersed, but she sat motionless until all were gone, and the sad-faced woman was putting out the lights. Then she rose, drew near through the gloom, and

asked her the name of the gentleman who had given them such a grand sermon. The woman told her, adding that, although he had two or three times spoken to them at the prayer meeting—such words of comfort, the poor soul added, as she had never in her life heard before—this was the first time he had occupied the pulpit. The woman thanked her, and went out into the street.

"God bless me!" she said to herself, as she walked away; "it *is* the stickit minister! Weel, won'ers 'ill never cease. The age o' mirracles 'ill be come back, I'm thinkin'!" And she laughed an oily contemptuous laugh in the depths of her profuse person.

What caused her astonishment need cause none to the thoughtful mind. The man was no longer burdened with any anxiety as to his reception by his hearers; he was hampered by no necromantic agony to raise the dead letter of the sermon buried in the tail-pocket of his coat; he had thirty years more of life, and a whole granary filled with such truths as grow for him who is ever breaking up the clods of his being to the spiritual sun and wind and dew; and

above all he had an absolute yet expanding confidence in his Father in heaven, and a tender love for everything human. The tongue of the dumb had been in training for song. And first of all he had learned to be silent while he had nought to reveal. He had been trained to babble about religion, but through God's grace had failed in his babble, and that was in itself a success. He would have made one of the swarm that year after year cast themselves like flies on the burning sacrifice that they may live on its flesh, with evil odours extinguishing the fire that should have gone up in flame; but a burning coal from off the altar had been laid on his lips, and had silenced them in torture. For thirty years he had held his peace, until the word of God had become as a fire in his bones: it was now breaking forth in flashes.

On the Monday, Mrs. Catanach sought the shop of the deacon that was an ironmonger, secured for herself a sitting in the chapel for the next half-year, and prepaid the sitting.

"Wha kens," she said to herself, "what birds may come to gether worms an' golachs *(beetles)*

aboot the boody-craw *(scarecrow)*, Sanny Grame!"

She was one to whom intrigue, founded on the knowledge of private history, was as the very breath of her being; she could not exist in composure without it. Wherever she went, therefore—and her changes of residence had not been few—it was one of her first cares to enter into connection with some religious community, first that she might have scope for her calling—that of a midwife, which in London would probably be straitened towards that of mere monthly nurse—and next that thereby she might have good chances for the finding of certain weeds of occult power that spring mostly in walled gardens, and are rare on the roadside—poisonous things mostly, called generically *secrets*.

At this time she had been for some painful months in possession of a most important one—painful, I say, because all those months she had discovered no possibility of making use of it. The trial had been hard. Her one passion was to drive the dark horses of society, and here she

had been sitting week after week on the coach-box over the finest team she had ever handled, ramping and "foming tarre," unable to give them their heads because the demon-grooms had disappeared and left the looped traces dangling from their collars. She had followed Florimel from Portlossie—to Edinburgh, and then to London, but not yet had seen how to approach her with probable advantage. In the meantime she had renewed old relations with a certain herb-doctor in Kentish Town, at whose house she was now accommodated. There she had already begun to entice the confidences of maid-servants, by use of what evil knowledge she had, and pretence to more, giving herself out as a wise woman. Her faith never failed her that, if she but kept handling the fowls of circumstance, one or other of them must at length drop an egg of opportunity in her lap. When she stumbled upon the schoolmaster, preaching in a chapel near her own haunts, she felt something more like a gust of gratitude to the dark power that sat behind and pulled the strings of events—for thus she saw through her own projected phantom the heart of the uni-

verse—than she had ever yet experienced. If there were such things as special providences, here, she said, was one; if not, then it was better luck than she had looked for. The main point in it was that the dominie seemed likely after all to turn out a popular preacher; then beyond a doubt other Scotch people would gather to him; this or that person might turn up, and anyone might turn out useful; one thread might be knotted to another, until all together made a clue to guide her straight through the labyrinth to the centre, to lay her hand on the collar of the demon of the house of Lossie. It was the biggest game of her life, and had been its game long before the opening of my narrative.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIL GENIUS.

WHEN Malcolm first visited Mr. Graham, the schoolmaster had already preached two or three times in the pulpit of Hope Chapel. His ministrations at the prayer-meetings had led to this. For every night on which he was expected to speak, there were more people present than on the last; and when the deacons saw this, they asked him to preach on the Sundays. After two Sundays they came to him in a body, and besought him to become a candidate for the vacant pulpit, assuring him of success if he did so. He gave a decided refusal, however, nor mentioned his reasons. His friend Marshal urged him, pledging himself for his income to an amount which would have been riches to the dominie, but in vain. There-

upon the silk-mercer concluded that he must have money, and, kind man as he was, grew kinder in consequence, and congratulated him on his independence.

"I depend more on the fewness of my wants than on any earthly store for supplying them," said the dominie.

Marshal's thermometer fell a little, but not his anxiety to secure services which, he insisted, would be for the glory of God and the everlasting good of perishing souls. The schoolmaster only smiled queerly and held his peace.

He consented, however, to preach the next Sunday, and on the Monday, consented to preach the next again. For several weeks the same thing occurred. But he would never promise on a Sunday, or allow the briefest advertisement to be given concerning him. All said he was feeling his way.

Neither had he, up to this time, said a word to Malcolm about the manner in which his Sundays were employed, while yet he talked much about a school he had opened in a room occupied in the evenings by a debating club, where he was teaching such children of small shop-

keepers and artisans as found their way to him —in part through his connection with the chapel-folk. When Malcolm had called on a Sunday, his landlady had been able to tell him nothing more than that Mr. Graham had gone out at such and such an hour—she presumed to church; and when he had once or twice expressed a wish to accompany him wherever he went to worship, Mr. Graham had managed somehow to let him go without having made any arrangement for his doing so.

On the evening after his encounter with Liftore, Malcolm visited the schoolmaster, and told him everything about the affair. He concluded by saying that Lizzy's wrongs had loaded the whip far more than his sister's insult; but that he was very doubtful whether he had had any right to constitute himself the avenger of either after such a fashion. Mr. Graham replied that a man ought never to be carried away by wrath, as he had so often sought to impress upon him, and not without success; but that, in the present case, as the rascal deserved it so well, he did not think he need trouble himself much. At the same time he ought to remind

himself that the rightness or wrongness of any particular act was of far less consequence than the rightness or wrongness of the will whence sprang the act; and that, while no man could be too anxious as to whether a contemplated action ought or ought not to be done, at the same time no man *could* do anything absolutely right until he was one with him whose was the only absolute self-generated purity—that is, until God dwelt in him and he in God.

Before he left, the schoolmaster had acquainted him with all that portion of his London history which he had hitherto kept from him, and told him where he was preaching.

When Caley returned to her mistress after giving Malcolm the message that she did not require his services, and reported the condition of his face, Florimel informed her of the chastisement he had received from Liftore, and desired her to find out for her how he was, for she was anxious about him. Somehow Florimel felt sorrier for him than she could well understand, seeing he was but a groom—a great lumbering fellow, all his life used to hard knocks, which probably never hurt him. That

her mistress should care so much about him added yet an acrid touch to Caley's spite; but she put on her bonnet and went to the mews, to confer with the wife of his lordship's groom, who, although an honest woman, had not yet come within her dislike. She went to make her inquiries, however, full of grave doubt as to his lordship's statement to her mistress; and the result of them was a conviction that, beyond his facial bruises, of which Mrs. Merton had heard no explanation, Malcolm had had no hurt. This confirmed her suspicion that his lordship had received what he professed to have given: from a window she had seen him mount his horse; and her woman's-fancy for him, while it added to her hate of Malcolm, did not prevent her from thinking of the advantage the discovery might bring in the prosecution of her own schemes. But now she began to fear Malcolm a little as well as hate him. And indeed he was rather a dangerous person to have about, where all but himself had secrets more or less bad, and one at least had dangerous ones—as Caley's conscience, or what poor monkey-rudiment in her did duty for one, in private asserted. Not-

withstanding her hold upon her mistress, she would not have felt it quite safe to let her know all her secrets. She would not have liked to say, for instance, how often she woke suddenly with a little feeble wail sounding in the ears that fingers cannot stop, or to confess that it cried out against a double injustice, that of life and that of death: she had crossed the border of the region of horror, and went about with a worm coiled in her heart, like a centipede in the stone of a peach.

"Merton's wife knows nothing, my lady," she said on her return. "I saw the fellow in the yard going about much as usual. He will stand a good deal of punishing, I fancy, my lady—like that brute of a horse he makes such a fuss with. I can't help wishing, for your ladyship's sake, we had never set eyes on him. He 'll do us all a mischief yet before we get rid of him. I've had a hinstinc' of it, my lady, from the first moment I set eyes on him;"—Caley's speech was never classic; when she was excited it was low.—"And when I 'ave a hinstinc' of anythink, he's not a dog as barks for nothink. Mark my words—and I'm sure I beg your par-

don, my lady—but that man will bring shame on the house. He's that arrergant an' interferin' as is certain sure to bring your ladyship into public speech an' a scandal: things will come to be spoke, my lady, that hadn't ought to be mentioned. Why, my lady, he must ha' struck his lordship, afore he'd ha' give him two such black eyes as them! And him that good-natured an' condescendin'!—I'm sure I don't know what's to come on it, but your ladyship might cast a thought on the rest of us females as can't take the liberties of born ladies without sufferin' for it. Think what the world will say of *us*. It's hard, my lady, on the likes of us."

But Florimel was not one to be talked into doing what she did not choose. Neither would she to her maid render her reasons for not choosing. She had repaired her fortifications, strengthened herself with Liftore, and was confident.

"The fact is, Caley," she said, "I have fallen in love with Kelpie, and never mean to part with her—at least till I can ride her—or she kills me. So I can't do without MacPhail. And I hope she won't kill him before he has persuaded her to let me mount her. The man must go

with the mare. Besides, he is such a strange fellow, if I turned him away I should quite expect him to poison her before he left."

The maid's face grew darker. That her mistress had the slightest intention of ever mounting that mare she did not find herself fool enough to believe, but of other reasons she could spy plenty behind. And such there truly were, though none of the sort which Caley's imagination, swift to evil, now supplied. The kind of confidence she reposed in her groom, Caley had no faculty for understanding, and was the last person to whom her mistress could impart the fact of her father's leaving her in charge to his young henchman. To the memory of her father she clung, and so far faithfully that, even now when Malcolm had begun to occasion her a feeling of awe and rebuke, she did not the less confidently regard him as her good genius that he was in danger of becoming an unpleasant one.

CHAPTER VI.

CONJUNCTIONS.

AS the days passed on, and Florimel heard nothing of Lenorme, the uneasiness that came with the thought of him gradually diminished, and all the associations of opposite complexion returned. Untrammelled by fear, the path into a scaring future seeming to be cut off, her imagination began to work in the quarry of her late experience, shaping its dazzling material into gorgeous castles, with foundations deep-dug in the air, wherein lorded the person and gifts and devotion of the painter. When lost in such blissful reveries, not seldom moments arrived in which she imagined herself—even felt as if she were capable, if not of marrying Lenorme in the flushed face of outraged society, yet of fleeing with him from the judg-

ment of the all but all-potent divinity to the friendly bosom of some blessed isle of the southern seas, whose empty luxuriance they might change into luxury, and there living a long harmonious idyll of wedded love, in which old age and death should be provided against by never taking them into account. This mere fancy, which, poor in courage as it was in invention, she was far from capable of carrying into effect, yet seemed to herself the outcome and sign of a whole world of devotion in her bosom. If one of the meanest of human conditions is conscious heroism, paltrier yet is heroism before the fact, incapable of self-realization! But even the poorest dreaming has its influences, and the result of hers was that the attentions of Liftore became again distasteful to her. And no wonder, for indeed his lordship's presence in the actual world made a poor show beside that of the painter in the ideal world of the woman who, if she could not with truth be said to love him, yet certainly had a powerful fancy for him: the mean phrase is good enough, even although the phantom of Lenorme roused in her all the twilight poetry of her nature, and

the presence of Liftore set her whole consciousness in the perpendicular shadowless gas-light of prudence and self-protection.

The pleasure of her castle-building was but seldom interrupted by any thought of the shamefulness of her behaviour to him. That did not matter much! She could so easily make up for all he had suffered! Her selfishness closed her eyes to her own falsehood. Had she meant it truly she would have been right both for him and for herself. To have repented and become as noble a creature as Lenorme was capable of imagining her—not to say as God had designed her, would indeed have been to make up for all he had suffered. But the poor blandishment she contemplated as amends, could render him blessed only while its intoxication blinded him to the fact that it meant nothing of what it ought to mean, that behind it was no entire, heart-filled woman. Meantime, as the past, with its delightful imprudences, its trembling joys, glided away, swiftly widening the space between her and her false fears and shames, and seeming to draw with it the very facts themselves, pro-

mising to obliterate at length all traces of them, she gathered courage; and as the feeling of exposure that had made the covert of Liftore's attentions acceptable, began to yield, her variableness began to re-appear, and his lordship to find her uncertain as ever. Assuredly, as his aunt said, she was yet but a girl incapable of knowing her own mind, and he must not press his suit. Nor had he the spur of jealousy or fear to urge him: society regarded her as his; and the shadowy repute of the bold-faced countess intercepted some favourable rays which would otherwise have fallen upon the young and beautiful marchioness from fairer luminaries even than Liftore.

But there was one good process, by herself little regarded, going on in Florimel: notwithstanding the moral discomfort oftener than once occasioned her by Malcolm, her confidence in him was increasing; and now that the kind of danger threatening her seemed altered, she leaned her mind upon him not a little—and more than she could well have accounted for to herself on the only grounds she could have adduced—namely that he was an attendant

authorized by her father, and, like herself, loyal to his memory and will; and that, faithful as a dog, he would fly at the throat of anyone who dared touch her—of which she had had late proof, supplemented by his silent endurance of consequent suffering. Demon sometimes looked angry—when she teased him—had even gone so far as to bare his teeth; but Malcolm had never shown temper. In a matter of imagined duty, he might presume—but that was a small thing beside the sense of safety his very presence brought with it. She shuddered indeed at the remembrance of one look he had given her, but that had been for no behaviour to himself; and now that the painter was gone, she was clear of all temptation to the sort of thing that had caused it; and never, never more would she permit herself to be drawn into circumstances the least equivocal!—If only Lenorme would come back, and allow her to be his friend—his *best* friend—his only young lady friend, leaving her at perfect liberty to do just as she liked, then all would be well—absolutely comfortable! In the meantime, life was endurable without him—and would be,

provided Liftore did not make himself disagreeable. If he did, there were other gentlemen who might be induced to keep him in check: she would punish him—she knew how. She liked him better, however, than any of those.

It was out of pure kindness to Malcolm, upon Liftore's representation of how he had punished him, that for the rest of the week she dispensed with his attendance upon herself. But he, unaware of the lies Liftore had told her, and knowing nothing, therefore, of her reason for doing so, supposed she resented the liberty he had taken in warning her against Caley, feared the breach would go on widening, and went about, if not quite downcast, yet less hopeful still. Everything seemed going counter to his desires. A whole world of work lay before him:—a harbour to build; a numerous fisher-clan to house as they ought to be housed; justice to do on all sides; righteous servants to appoint in place of oppressors; and, all over, to show the heavens more just than his family had in the past allowed them to appear; he had mortgages and other debts to pay off—

clearing his feet from fetters and his hands from manacles, that he might be the true lord of his people; he had Miss Horn to thank, and the schoolmaster to restore to the souls and hearts of Portlossie; and, next of all to his sister, he had old Duncan, his first friend and father, to find and minister to. Not a day passed, not a night did he lay down his head, without thinking of him. But the old man, whatever his hardships, and even the fishermen, with no harbour to run home to from the wild elements, were in no dangers to compare with such as threatened his sister. To set her free was his first business, and that business as yet refused to be done. Hence he was hemmed in, shut up. incarcerated in stubborn circumstance, from a long-reaching range of duties, calling aloud upon his conscience and heart to hasten with the first, that he might reach the second. What rendered it the more disheartening was, that, having discovered, as he hoped, how to compass his first end, the whole possibility had by his sister's behaviour, and the consequent disappearance of Lenorme, been swept from him, leaving him more resourceless than ever.

When Sunday evening came, he found his way to Hope Chapel, and walking in, was shown to a seat by the grimy-faced pew-opener. It was with strange feelings he sat there, thinking of the past, and looking for the appearance of his friend on the pulpit-stair. But his feelings would have been stranger still had he seen who sat in the pew immediately behind him, watching him like a cat watching a mouse, or rather like a half-grown kitten watching a rat, for she was a little frightened at him, even while resolved to have him. But how could she doubt her final success, when her plans were already affording her so much more than she had expected? Who would have looked for the great red stag himself to come browsing so soon about the scarecrow! He was too large game, however, to be stalked without due foresight.

When the congregation was dismissed, after a sermon the power of whose utterance astonished Malcolm, accustomed as he was to the schoolmaster's best moods, he waited until the preacher was at liberty from the unwelcome attentions and vulgar congratulations of the

richer and more forward of his hearers, and then joined him to walk home with him.—He was followed to the schoolmaster's lodging, and thence, an hour after, to his own, by a little boy, far too little to excite suspicion, the grandson of Mrs. Catanach's friend, the herb-doctor.

Until now the woman had not known that Malcolm was in London. When she learned that he was lodged so near Portland Place, she concluded that he was watching his sister, and chuckled over the idea of his being watched in turn by herself.

Every day for weeks after her declaration concerning the birth of Malcolm, had the mind of Mrs. Catanach been exercised to the utmost to invent some mode of undoing her own testimony. She would have had no scruples, no sense of moral disgust, in eating every one of her words; but a magistrate and a lawyer had both been present at the uttering of them, and she feared the risk. Malcolm's behaviour to her after his father's death had embittered the unfriendly feelings she had cherished towards him for many years. While she believed him base-

born, and was even ignorant as to his father, she had thought to secure power over him for the annoyance of the blind old man to whom she had committed him, and whom she hated with the hatred of a wife with whom for the best of reasons he had refused to live; but she had found in the boy a rectitude over which, although she had assailed it from his childhood, she could gain no influence. Either a blind repugnance in Malcolm's soul, or a childish instinct of and revulsion from embodied evil, had held them apart. Even then it had added to her vile indignation that she regarded him as owing her gratitude for not having murdered him at the instigation of his uncle; and when at length, to her endless chagrin, she had herself unwittingly supplied the only lacking link in the testimony that should raise him to rank and wealth, she imagined that by making affidavit to the facts she had already divulged, she enlarged the obligation infinitely, and might henceforth hold him in her hand a tool for further operations. When, therefore, he banished her from Lossie House, and sought to bind her to silence as to his rank by the conditional

promise of a small annuity, she hated him with her whole huge power of hating. And now she must make speed, for his incognito in a great city afforded a thousandfold facility for doing him a mischief. And first she must draw closer a certain loose tie she had already looped betwixt herself and the household of Lady Bellair. This tie was the conjunction of her lying influence with the credulous confidence of a certain very ignorant and rather wickedly romantic scullery-maid, with whom, having in espial seen her come from the house, she had scraped acquaintance, and to whom, for the securing of power over her through her imagination, she had made the strangest and most appalling disclosures. Amongst other secret favours, she had promised to compound for her a horrible mixture—some of whose disgusting ingredients, as potent as hard to procure, she named in her awe-stricken hearing—which, administered under certain conditions and with certain precautions, one of which was absolute secrecy in regard to the person who provided it, must infallibly secure for her the affections of any man on whom she might cast a loving eye,

and whom she could, either with or without his consent, contrive to cause partake of the same. This girl she now sought, and from her learned all she knew about Malcolm. Pursuing her inquiries into the nature and composition of the household, however, Mrs. Catanach soon discovered a far more capable and indeed less scrupulous associate and instrument in Caley. I will not introduce my reader to any of their evil councils, although, for the sake of my own credit, it might be well to be less considerate, seeing that many, notwithstanding the super-abundant evidence of history, find it all but impossible to believe in the existence of such moral abandonment as theirs. I will merely state concerning them, and all the relations of the two women, that Mrs. Catanach assumed and retained the upper hand, in virtue of her superior knowledge, invention, and experience, gathering from Caley, as she had hoped, much valuable information, full of reactions, and tending to organic development of scheme in the brain of the arch-plotter. But their designs were so mutually favourable as to promise from the first a final coalescence in some common plan for their attainment.

Those who knew that Miss Campbell, as Portlossie regarded her, had been in reality Lady Lossie, and was the mother of Malcolm, knew as well that Florimel had no legal title even to the family cognomen; but if his mother, and therefore the time of his mother's death, remained unknown, the legitimacy of his sister would remain unsuspected even upon his appearance as the heir. Now there were but three besides Mrs. Catanach and Malcolm who did know who was his mother, namely, Miss Horn, Mr. Graham, and a certain Mr. Morrison, a laird and magistrate near Portlossie, an elderly man, and of late in feeble health. The lawyers the marquis had employed on his death-bed did not know: he had, for Florimel's sake, taken care that they should not. Upon what she knew and what she guessed of these facts, regarded in all their relations according to her own theories of human nature, the midwife would found a scheme of action.

Doubtless she saw, and prepared for it, that after a certain point should be reached the very similarity of their designs must cause a rupture between her and Caley: neither could expect

the other to endure such a rival near her hidden throne of influence; for the aim of both was power in a great family, with consequent money, and consideration, and midnight councils, and the wielding of all the weapons of hint and threat and insinuation. There was this difference, indeed, that in Caley's eye money was the chief thing, while power itself was the Swedenborgian hell of the midwife's bliss.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INNOCENT PLOT.

FLORIMEL and Lady Clementina Thornicroft, the same who in the park rebuked Malcolm for his treatment of Kelpie, had met several times during the spring, and had been mutually attracted—Florimel as to a nature larger, more developed, more self-supporting than her own, and Lady Clementina as to one who, it was plain, stood in sore need of what countenance and encouragement to good and free action the friendship of one more experienced might afford her. Lady Clementina was but a few years older than Florimel, it is true, but had shown a courage which had already wrought her an unquestionable influence, and that chiefly with the best. The root of this courage was compassion. Her rare humanity

of heart would, at the slightest appearance of injustice, drive her like an angel with a flaming sword against customs regarded, consciously or unconsciously, as the very buttresses of social distinction. Anything but a wise woman, she had yet so much in her of what is essential to all wisdom—love to her kind, that, if as yet she had done little but blunder, she had at least blundered beautifully. On every society that had for its declared end the setting right of wrong or the alleviation of misery, she lavished, and mostly wasted, her money. Every misery took to her the shape of a wrong. Hence to every mendicant that could trump up a plausible story, she offered herself a willing prey. Even when the barest-faced imposition was brought home to one of the race parasitical, her first care was to find all possible excuse for his conduct: it was matter of pleasure to her friends when she stopped there, and made no attempt at absolute justification.

Left like Florimel an orphan, but at a yet earlier age, she had been brought up with a care that had gone over into severity, against which her nature had revolted with an energy

that gathered strength from her own repression of its signs; and when she came of age, and took things into her own hands, she carried herself in its eyes so oddly, yet with such sweetness and dignity and consistency in her oddest extravagances, that society honoured her even when it laughed at her, loved her, listened to her, applauded, approved—did everything except imitate her—which indeed was just as well, for else confusion would have been worse confounded. She was always rushing to defence—with money, with indignation, with refuge. It would look like a caricature did I record the number of charities to which she belonged, and the various societies which, in the exuberance of her passionate benevolence, she had projected and of necessity abandoned. Yet still the fire burned, for her changes were from no changeableness: through them all the fundamental operation of her character remained the same. The case was that, for all her headlong passion for deliverance, she could not help discovering now and then, through an occasional self-assertion of that real good sense which her rampant and unsubjected benevolence could

but overlay, not finally smother, that she was either doing nothing at all, or more evil than good.

The lack of discipline in her goodness came out in this, at times amusingly, that she would always at first side with the lower or weaker or worse. If a dog had torn a child, and was going to be killed in consequence, she would not only intercede for the dog, but absolutely side with him, mentioning this and that provocation which the naughty child must have given him ere he could have been goaded to the deed. Once when the schoolmaster in her village was going to cane a boy for cruelty to a cripple, she pleaded for his pardon on the ground that it was worse to be cruel than to be a cripple, and therefore more to be pitied. Everything painful was to her cruel, and softness and indulgence, moral honey and sugar and nuts to all alike, was the panacea for human ills. She could not understand that infliction might be loving kindness. On one occasion when a boy was caught in the act of picking her pocket, she told the policeman he was doing nothing of the sort—he was only searching for a lozenge for his

terrible cough; and in proof of her asserted conviction, she carried him home with her, but lost him before morning, as well as the spoon with which he had eaten his gruel.

As to her person I have already made a poor attempt at describing it. She might have been grand but for loveliness. When she drew herself up in indignation, however, she would look grand for the one moment ere the blood rose to her cheek, and the water to her eyes. She would have taken the whole world to her infinite heart, and in unwisdom coddled it into corruption. Praised be the grandeur of the God who can endure to make and see his children suffer. Thanks be to him for his north winds and his poverty, and his bitterness that falls upon the spirit that errs: let those who know him thus praise the Lord for his goodness. But Lady Clementina had not yet descried the face of the Son of Man through the mists of Mount Sinai, and she was not one to justify the ways of God to men. Not the less was it the heart of God in her that drew her to the young marchioness, over whom was cast the shadow of a tree that gave but baneful shelter. She liked

her frankness, her activity, her daring, and fancied that, like herself, she was at noble feud with that infernal parody of the kingdom of heaven, called Society. She did not well understand her relation to Lady Bellair, concerning whom she was in doubt whether or not she was her legal guardian, but she saw plainly enough that the countess wanted to secure her for her nephew, and this nephew had about him a certain air of perdition, which even the catholic heart of Lady Clementina could not brook. She saw too that, being a mere girl, and having no scope of choice in the limited circle of their visitors, she was in great danger of yielding without a struggle, and she longed to take her in charge like a poor little persecuted kitten, for the possession of which each of a family of children was contending. What if her father had belonged to a rowdy set, was that any reason why his innocent daughter should be devoured, body and soul and possessions, by those of the same set who had not yet perished in their sins? Lady Clementina thanked Heaven that she came herself of decent people, who paid their debts, dared acknowledge themselves in the wrong, and were

as honest as if they had been born peasants; and she hoped a shred of the mantle of their good name had dropped upon her, big enough to cover also this poor little thing who had come of no such parentage. With her passion for redemption therefore, she seized every chance of improving her acquaintance with Florimel, and it was her anxiety to gain such a standing in her favour as might further her coveted ministration, that had prevented her from bringing her charge of brutality against Malcolm as soon as she discovered whose groom he was: when she had secured her footing on the peak of her friendship, she would unburden her soul, and meantime the horse must suffer for his mistress —a conclusion in itself a great step in advance, for it went dead against one of her most confidently argued principles, namely, that the pain of any animal is, in every sense, of just as much consequence as the pain of any other, human or inferior: pain is pain, she said; and equal pains are equal wherever they sting;—in which she would have been right, I think, if pain and suffering were the same thing; but, knowing well that the same degree and even the same kind of

pain means two very different things in the foot and in the head, I refuse the proposition.

Happily for Florimel, she had by this time made progress enough to venture a proposal—namely, that she should accompany her to a small estate she had on the south coast, with a little ancient house upon it—a strange place altogether, she said—to spend a week or two in absolute quiet—only she must come alone—without even a maid: she would take none herself. This she said because, with the instinct, if not quite insight, of a true nature, she could not endure the woman Caley.

"Will you come with me there for a fortnight?" she concluded.

"I shall be delighted," returned Florimel, without a moment's hesitation. "I am getting quite sick of London. There's no room in it. And there's the spring all outside, and can't get in here! I shall be only too glad to go with you, you dear creature!"

"And on those hard terms—no maid, you know?" insisted Clementina.

"The only thing wanted to make the pleas-

ure complete! I shall be charmed to be rid of her."

"I am glad to see you so independent."

"You don't imagine me such a baby as not to be able to get on without a maid! You should have seen me in Scotland! I hated having a woman about me then. And indeed I don't like it a bit better now—only everybody has one, and your clothes want looking after," added Florimel, thinking what a weight it would be off her if she could get rid of Caley altogether. "—But I *should* like to take my horse," she said. "I don't know what I should do in the country without Abbot."

"Of course; we must have our horses," returned Clementina. "And—yes—you had better bring your groom."

"Please. You will find him very useful. He can do anything and everything—and is so kind and helpful!"

"Except to his horse," Clementina was on the point of saying, but thought again she would first secure the mistress, and bide her time to attack the man.

Before they parted, the two ladies had talked

themselves into ecstasies over the anticipated enjoyments of their scheme. It must be carried out at once.

"Let us tell nobody," said Lady Clementina, "and set off to-morrow."

"Enchanting!" cried Florimel, in full response.

Then her brow clouded.

"There is one difficulty, though," she said. "—No man could ride Kelpie with a led horse; and if we had to employ another, Liftore would be sure to hear where we had gone."

"That would spoil all," said Clementina. "But how much better it would be to give that poor creature a rest, and bring the other I see him on sometimes!"

"And by the time we came back, there would not be a living creature, horse or man, anything bigger than a rat, about the stable. Kelpie herself would be dead of hunger, if she hadn't been shot. No, no; where Malcolm goes Kelpie must go. Besides, she's such fun—you can't think!"

"Then I'll tell you what!" cried Clementina, after a moment's pause of perplexity: "we'll

ride down! It's not a hundred miles, and we can take as many days on the road as we please."

"Better and better!" cried Florimel. "We'll run away with each other.—But what will dear old Bellair say?"

"Never mind her," rejoined Clementina. "She will have nothing to say. You can write and tell her as much as will keep her from being really alarmed. Order your man to get everything ready, and I will instruct mine. He is such a staid old fellow, you know, he will be quite protection. To-morrow morning we shall set out together for a ride in Richmond Park—that lying in our way. You can leave a letter on the breakfast-table, saying you are gone with me for a little quiet. You're not in chancery—are you?"

"I don't know," answered Florimel. "I suppose I'm all right.—Any how, whether I'm in chancery or not, here I am, and going with you; and if chancery don't like it, chancery may come and fetch me."

"Send anything you think you may want to my house. I shall get a box ready, and we will

write from some town on our way to have it sent there, and then we can write for it from The Gloom. We shall find all mere *necessaries* there."

So the thing was arranged: they would start quite early the next morning; and that there might be no trouble in the streets, Malcolm should go before with Kelpie, and wait them in the park.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JOURNEY.

MALCOLM was overjoyed at the prospect of an escape to the country—and yet more to find that his mistress wanted to have him with her—more still to understand that the journey was to be kept a secret. Perhaps now, far from both Caley and Liftore, he might say something to open her eyes; yet how should he avoid the appearance of a tale-bearer?

It was a sweet fresh morning, late in the spring—those loveliest of hours that unite the seasons, like the shimmering question of green or blue in the feathers of a peacock. He had set out an hour before the rest, and now, a little way within the park, was coaxing Kelpie to stand, that he might taste the morning in peace. The sun was but a few degrees above the hori-

zon, shining with all his heart, and the earth was taking the shine with all hers. "I too am light," she was saying, "although I can but receive it." The trees were covered with baby-leaves, half wrapped in their swaddling clothes, and their breath was a warm aromatic odour in the glittering air. The air and the light seemed one, and Malcolm felt as if his soul were breathing the light into its very depths, while his body was drinking the soft spicy wind. For Kelpie, she was as full of life as if she had been meant for a winged horse, but by some accident of nature the wing-cases had never opened, and the wing-life was for ever trying to get out at her feet. The consequent restlessness, where there was plenty of space as here, caused Malcolm no more discomposure than, in his old fishing-days, a gale with plenty of sea-room. And the song of the larks was one with the light and the air. The budding of the trees was their way of singing; but the larks beat them at that. "What a power of joy," thought Malcolm, "there must be in God, to be able to keep so many larks so full of bliss!" He was going to say—"without getting tired;" but he saw

that it was the eternal joy itself that bubbled from their little fountains: weariness there would be the silence of all song, would be death, utter vanishment to the gladness of the universe. The sun would go out like a spark upon burnt paper, and the heart of man would forget the sound of laughter. Then he said to himself: "The larks do not make their own singing: do mortals make their own sighing?" And he saw that at least they might open wider the doors of their hearts to the Perseus Joy that comes to slay the grief-monsters. Then he thought how his life had been widening out with the years. He could not say that it was now more pleasant than it had been; he had Stoicism enough to doubt whether it would ever become so from any mere change of circumstances. Dangers and sufferings that one is able for, are not misfortunes or even hardships—so far from such, that youth delights in them. Indeed he sorely missed the adventure of the herring-fishing. Kelpie, however, was as good as a stiff gale. If only all were well with his sister! Then he would go back to Portlossie and have fishing enough. But he must be

patient and follow as he was led. At three and twenty, he reflected, Milton was content to seem to himself but a poor creature, and was careful only to be ready for whatever work should hereafter be required of him: such contentment, with such hope and resolve at the back of it, he saw to be the right and the duty both of every man. He whose ambition is to be ready when he is wanted, whatever the work may be, may wait not the less watchful that he is content. His heart grew lighter, his head clearer, and by the time the two ladies with their attendant appeared, he felt such a masterdom over Kelpie as he had never felt before.

They rode twenty miles that day with ease, putting up at the first town. The next day they rode about the same distance. The next they rode nearly thirty miles. On the fourth, with an early start, and a good rest in the middle, they accomplished a yet greater distance, and at night arrived at The Gloom, Wastbeach—after a journey of continuous delight to three at least of the party, Florimel and Malcolm having especially enjoyed that portion of it which led through Surrey, where

England and Scotland meet and mingle in waste, heathery moor, and rich valley. Much talk had passed between the ladies, and Florimel had been set thinking about many things, though certainly about none after the wisest fashion.

A young half-moon was still up when, after riding miles through pine woods, they at length drew near the house. Long before they reached it however, a confused noise of dogs met them in the forest. Clementina had written to the housekeeper, and every dog about the place, and the dogs were multitudinous, had been expecting her all day, had heard the sound of their horses' hoofs miles off, and had at once begun to announce her approach. Nor were the dogs the only cognizant or expectant animals. Most of the creatures about the place understood that something was happening, and probably associated it with their mistress; for almost every live thing knew her—from the rheumatic cart-horse, forty years of age, and every whit as respectable in Clementina's eyes as her father's old butler, to the wild cats that haunted the lofts and gar-

rets of the old Elizabethan hunting-lodge.

When they dismounted, the ladies could hardly get into the house for dogs: those which could not reach their mistress, turned to Florimel, and came swarming about her and leaping upon her, until, much as she liked animal favour, she would gladly have used her whip—but dared not, because of the presence of their mistress. If the theories of that mistress allowed them anything of a moral nature, she was certainly culpable in refusing them their right to a few cuts of the whip.

Mingled with all the noises of dogs and horses, came a soft nestling murmur that filled up the interspaces of sound which even their tumult could not help leaving. Florimel was too tired to hear it, but Malcolm heard it, and it filled all the interspaces of his soul with a speechless delight. He knew it for the still small voice of the awful sea.

Florimel scarcely cast a glance around the dark old-fashioned room into which she was shown, but went at once to bed, and when the old housekeeper carried her something from the supper-table at which she had been ex-

pected, she found her already fast asleep. By the time Malcolm had put Kelpie to rest, he also was a little tired, and lay awake no moment longer than his sister.

CHAPTER IX.

DISCIPLINE.

WHAT with rats and mice, and cats and owls, and creaks and cracks, there was no quiet about the place from night to morning; and what with swallows and rooks, and cocks and kine, and horses and foals, and dogs and pigeons and peacocks, and guinea-fowls and turkeys and geese, and every farm-creature but pigs, which, with all her zootrophy, Clementina did not like, no quiet from morning to night. But if there was no quiet, there was plenty of calm, and the sleep of neither brother nor sister was disturbed.

Florimel awoke in the sweetest concert of pigeon-murmuring, duck-diplomacy, fowl-foraging, foal-whinnering—the word wants an *r* in it—and all the noises of rural life. The sun was

shining into the room by a window far off at the further end, bringing with him strange sylvan shadows, not at once to be interpreted. He must have been shining for hours, so bright and steady did he shine. She sprang out of bed—with no lazy London resurrection of the old buried, half-sodden corpse, sleepy and ashamed, but with the new birth of the new day, refreshed and strong, like a Hercules-baby. A few aching remnants of stiffness was all that was left of the old fatigue. It was a heavenly joy to think that no Caley would come knocking at her door. She glided down the long room to the sunny window, drew aside the rich old faded curtain, and peeped out. Nothing but pines and pines—Scotch firs all about and everywhere! They came within a few yards of the window. She threw it open. The air was still, the morning sun shone hot upon them, and the resinous odour exhaled from their bark and their needles and their fresh buds, filled the room—sweet and clean. There was nothing, not even a fence, between this wing of the house and the wood.

All through his deep sleep, Malcolm heard

the sound of the sea—whether of the phantom-sea in his soul, or of the world-sea to whose murmurs he had listened with such soft delight as he fell asleep, matters little: the sea was with him in his dreams. But when he awoke it was to no musical crushing of water-drops, no half-articulated tones of animal speech, but to tumult and outcry from the stables. It was but too plain that he was wanted. Either Kelpie had waked too soon, or he had overslept himself: she was kicking furiously. Hurriedly induing a portion of his clothing, he rushed down and across the yard, shouting to her as he ran, like a nurse as she runs up the stair to a screaming child. She stopped once to give an eager whinny, and then fell to again. Griffiths, the groom, and the few other men about the place, were looking on appalled. He darted to the corn-bin, got a great pottleful of oats, and shot into her stall. She buried her nose in them like the very demon of hunger, and he left her for the few moments of peace that would follow. He must finish his dressing as fast as he could: already, after four days of travel, which with her meant anything but a

straight-forward jog-trot struggle with space, she needed a good gallop! When he returned, he found her just finishing her oats, and beginning to grow angry with her own nose for getting so near the bottom of the manger. While yet there was no worse sign, however, than the fidgeting of her hind quarters, and she was still busy, he made haste to saddle her. But her unusually obstinate refusal of the bit, and his difficulty in making her open her unwilling jaws, gave unmistakable indication of coming conflict. Anxiously he asked the bystanders after some open place where he might let her go—fields or tolerably smooth heath, or sandy beach. He dared not take her through the trees, he said, while she was in such a humour: she would dash herself to pieces. They told him there was a road straight from the stables to the shore, and there miles of pure sand without a pebble. Nothing could be better. He mounted and rode away.

Florimel was yet but half-dressed, when the door of her room opened suddenly, and Lady Clementina darted in—the lovely chaos of her night not more than half as far reduced

to order as that of Florimel's. Her moonlight hair, nearly as long as that of the fabled Godiva, was flung wildly about her in heavy masses. Her eyes were wild also; she looked like a holy Maenad. With a glide like the swoop of an avenging angel, she pounced upon Florimel, caught her by the wrist, and pulled her towards the door. Florimel was startled, but made no resistance. She half led, half dragged her up a stair that rose from a corner of the hall gallery to the battlements of a little square tower, whence a few yards of the beach, through a chain of slight openings amongst the pines, was visible. Upon that spot of beach, a strange thing was going on—at which afresh Clementina gazed with indignant horror, but Florimel eagerly stared with the forward-borne eyes of a spectator of the Roman arena. She saw Kelpie reared on end, striking out at Malcolm with her fore-hoofs, and snapping with angry teeth—then upon those teeth receive such a blow from his fist that she swerved, and wheeling, flung her hind hoofs at his head. But Malcolm was too quick for her; she spent her heels in the air, and he had her by the bit. Again she reared,

and would have struck at him, but he kept well by her side, and with the powerful bit forced her to rear to her full height. Just as she was falling backwards, he pushed her head from him, and bearing her down sideways, seated himself on it the moment it touched the ground. Then first the two women turned to each other. An arch of victory bowed Florimel's lip; her eyebrows were uplifted; the blood flushed her cheek, and darkened the blue in her wide-opened eyes. Lady Clementina's forehead was gathered in vertical wrinkles over her nose, and all about her eyes was contracted as if squeezing from them the flame of indignation, while her teeth and lips were firmly closed. The two made a splendid contrast. When Clementina's gaze fell on her visitor, the fire in her eyes burned more angry still: her soul was stirred by the presence of wrong and cruelty, and here, her guest, and looking her straight in the eyes, was a young woman, one word from whom would stop it all, actually enjoying the sight!

"Lady Lossie, I am ashamed of you!" she said, with severest reproof; and turning from her, she ran down the stair.

Florimel turned again towards the sea. Presently she caught sight of Clementina glimpsing through the pines, "now in glimmer and now in gloom," as she sped swiftly to the shore, and, after a few short minutes of disappearance, saw her emerge upon the space of sand where sat Malcolm on the head of the demoness. But alas! she could only see. She could hardly even hear the sound of the tide.

"MacPhail, are you a man?" cried Clementina, startling him so that in another instant the floundering mare would have been on her feet. With a right noble anger in her face, and her hair flying like a wind-torn cloud, she rushed out of the wood upon him, where he sat quietly tracing a proposition of Euclid on the sand with his whip.

"Ay, and a bold one," was on Malcolm's lips for reply, but he bethought himself in time.

"I am sorry what I am compelled to do should annoy your ladyship," he said.

What with indignation and breathlessness—she had run so fast—Clementina had exhausted herself in that one exclamation, and stood panting and staring. The black bulk of Kelpie lay

outstretched on the yellow sand, giving now and then a sprawling kick, or a wamble like a lumpy snake, and her soul commiserated each movement as if it had been the last throe of dissolution, while the grey fire of the mare's one-visible fierce eye, turned up from the shadow of Malcolm's superimposed bulk, seemed to her tender heart a mute appeal for woman's help.

As Malcolm spoke, he cautiously shifted his position, and, half-rising, knelt with one knee where he had sat before, looking observant at Lady Clementina. The champion of oppressed animality soon recovered speech.

"Get off the poor creature's head instantly," she said, with dignified command. "I will permit no such usage of living thing on my ground."

"I am very sorry to seem rude, my lady," answered Malcolm, "but to obey you might be to ruin my mistress's property. If the mare were to break away, she would dash herself to pieces in the wood."

"You have goaded her to madness."

"I am the more bound to take care of her then," said Malcolm. "But indeed it is only

temper—such temper, however, that I almost believe she is at times possessed of a demon."

"The demon is in yourself. There is none in her but what your cruelty has put there. Let her up, I command you."

"I dare not, my lady. If she were to get loose, she would tear your ladyship to pieces."

"I will take my chance."

"But I will not, my lady. I know the danger, and have to take care of you who do not. There is no occasion to be uneasy about the mare. She is tolerably comfortable. I am not hurting her—not much. Your ladyship does not reflect how strong a horse's skull is. And you see what great powerful breaths she draws!"

"She is in agony," cried Clementina.

"Not in the least, my lady. She is only balked of her own way, and does not like it."

"And what right have you to balk her of her own way? Has she no right to a mind of her own?"

"She may of course have her mind, but she can't have her way. She has got a master."

"And what right have you to be her master?"

"That my master, my Lord Lossie, gave me the charge of her."

"I don't mean that sort of right; that goes for nothing. What right in the nature of things can you have to tyrannize over any creature?"

"None, my lady. But the higher nature has the right to rule the lower in righteousness. Even you can't have your own way always, my lady."

"I certainly cannot now, so long as you keep in that position. Pray, is it in virtue of *your* being the higher nature that you keep *my* way from *me?*"

"No, my lady. But it is in virtue of right. If I wanted to take your ladyship's property, your dogs would be justified in refusing me my way.—I do not think I exaggerate when I say that, if my mare here had *her* way, there would not be a living creature about your house by this day week."

Lady Clementina had never yet felt upon her the power of a stronger nature than her own. She had had to yield to authority, but never to superiority. Hence her self-will had been ab-

normally developed. Her very compassion was self-willed. Now for the first time, she continuing altogether unaware of it, the presence of such a nature began to operate upon her. The calmness of Malcolm's speech and the immovable decision of his behaviour told.

"But," she said, more calmly, "your mare has had four long journeys, and she should have rested to-day."

"Rest is just the one thing beyond her, my lady. There is a volcano of life and strength in her you have no conception of. I could not have dreamed of horse like her. She has never in her life had enough to do. I believe that is the chief trouble with her. What we all want, my lady, is a master—a real right master. I've got one myself, and——"

"You mean you want one yourself," said Lady Clementina. "You've only got a mistress, and she spoils you."

"That is not what I meant, my lady," returned Malcolm. "But one thing I know, is, that Kelpie would soon come to grief without me. I shall keep her here till her half-hour is out, and then let her take another gallop."

Lady Clementina turned away. She was defeated. Malcolm knelt there on one knee, with a hand on the mare's shoulder, so calm, so imperturbable, so ridiculously full of argument, that there was nothing more for her to do or say. Indignation, expostulation, were powerless upon him, as mist upon a rock. He was the oddest, most incomprehensible of grooms.

Going back to the house, she met Florimel, and turned again with her to the scene of discipline. Ere they reached it, Florimel's delight with all around her had done something to restore Clementina's composure: the place was precious to her, for there she had passed nearly the whole of her childhood. But to anyone with a heart open to the expressions of Nature's countenance, the place could not but have a strange as well as peculiar charm.

Florimel had lost her way. I would rather it had been in the moonlight, but slant sunlight was next best. It shone through a slender multitude of mast-like stems, whose shadows complicated the wood with wonder, while the light seemed amongst them to have gathered to itself properties appreciable by other organs

besides the eyes, and to dwell bodily with the trees. The soil was mainly of sand, the soil to delight the long tap-roots of the fir-trees, covered above with a thick layer of slow-forming mould, in the gradual odoriferous decay of needles and cones and flakes of bark and knots of resinous exudation. It grew looser and sandier, and its upper coat thinner, as she approached the shore. The trees shrunk in size, stood farther apart, and grew more individual, sending out gnarled boughs on all sides of them, and asserting themselves as the tall slender branchless ones in the social restraint of the thicker wood dared not do. They thinned and thinned, and the sea and the shore came shining through, for the ground sloped to the beach without any intervening abruption of cliff or even bank; they thinned and thinned until all were gone, and the bare long yellow sands lay stretched out on both sides for miles, gleaming and sparkling in the sun, especially at one spot where the water of a little stream wandered about over them, as if it had at length found its home, but was too weary to enter and lose its weariness, and must wait for the tide to come

up and take it. But when Florimel reached the strand, she could see nothing of the group she sought: the shore took a little bend, and a tongue of forest came in between.

She was on her way back to the house when she met Clementina, also returning discomfited. Pleased as she was with them, her hostess soon interrupted her ecstasies by breaking out in accusation of Malcolm, not untempered, however, with a touch of dawning respect. At the same time her report of his words was anything but accurate, for as no one can be just without love, so no one can truly report without understanding. But they had not time to discuss him now, as Clementina insisted on Florimel's putting an immediate stop to his cruelty.

When they reached the spot, there was the groom again seated on his animal's head, with a new proposition in the sand before him.

"Malcolm," said his mistress, "let the mare get up. You must let her off the rest of her punishment this time."

Malcolm rose again to his knee.

"Yes, my lady," he said. "But perhaps your ladyship wouldn't mind helping me to unbuckle

her girths before she gets to her feet. I want to give her a bath.—Come to this side," he went on, as Florimel advanced to do his request, "—round here by her head. If your ladyship would kneel upon it, that would be best. But you mustn't move till I tell you."

"I will do anything you bid me—exactly as you say, Malcolm," responded Florimel.

"There's the Colonsay blood! I can trust that!" cried Malcolm, with a pardonable outbreak of pride in his family. Whether most of his ancestors could so well have appreciated the courage of obedience, is not very doubtful.

Clementina was shocked at the insolent familiarity of her poor little friend's groom, but Florimel saw none, and kneeled, as if she had been in church, on the head of the mare, with the fierce crater of her fiery brain blazing at her knee. Then Malcolm lifted the flap of the saddle, undid the buckles of the girths, and drawing them a little from under her, laid the saddle on the sand, talking all the time to Florimel, lest a sudden word might seem a direction, and she should rise before the right moment had come.

"Please, my lady Clementina, will you go to the edge of the wood. I can't tell what she may do when she gets up. And please, my lady Florimel, will you run there too, the moment you get off her head."

When he had got her rid of the saddle, he gathered the reins together in his bridle hand, took his whip in the other, and softly and carefully straddled across her huge barrel without touching her.

"Now, my lady!" he said. "Run for the wood."

Florimel rose and fled, heard a great scrambling behind her, and turning at the first tree, which was only a few yards off, saw Kelpie on her hind legs, and Malcolm, whom she had lifted with her, sticking by his knees on her bare back. The moment her fore feet touched the ground, he gave her the spur severely, and after one plunging kick, off they went westward over the sands, away from the sun; nor did they turn before they had dwindled to such a speck that the ladies could not have told by their eyes whether it was moving or not. At length they saw it swerve a little; by and by

it began to grow larger; and after another moment or two they could distinguish what it was, tearing along towards them like a whirlwind, the lumps of wet sand flying behind like an upward storm of clods. What a picture it was!—only neither of the ladies was calm enough to see it picturewise: the still sea before, type of the infinite always, and now of its repose; the still straight solemn wood behind, like a past world that had gone to sleep—out of which the sand seemed to come flowing down, to settle in the long sand-lake of the beach; that flameless furnace of life tearing along the shore, betwixt the sea and the land, between time and eternity, guided, but only half controlled, by the strength of a higher will; and the two angels that had issued—whether out of the forest of the past or the sea of the future, who could tell?—and now stood, with hand-shaded eyes, gazing upon that fierce apparition of terrene life.

As he came in front of them, Malcolm suddenly wheeled Kelpie, so suddenly and in so sharp a curve that he made her "turne close to the ground, like a cat, when scratchingly she

wheeles about after a mouse," as Sir Philip Sidney says, and dashed her straight into the sea. The two ladies gave a cry, Florimel of delight, Clementina of dismay, for she knew the coast, and that there it shelved suddenly into deep water. But that was only the better to Malcolm: it was the deep water he sought, though he got it with a little pitch sooner than he expected. He had often ridden Kelpie into the sea at Portlossie, even in the cold autumn weather when first she came into his charge, and nothing pleased her better or quieted her more. He was a heavy weight to swim with, but she displaced much water. She carried her head bravely, he balanced sideways, and they swam splendidly. To the eyes of Clementina the mare seemed to be labouring for her life.

When Malcolm thought she had had enough of it, he turned her head to the shore. But then came the difficulty. So steeply did the shore shelve that Kelpie could not get a hold with her hind hoofs to scramble up into the shallow water. The ladies saw the struggle, and Clementina, understanding it, was running in an agony right into the water, with the vain

idea of helping them, when Malcolm threw himself off, drawing the reins over Kelpie's head as he fell, and swimming but the length of them shorewards, felt the ground with his feet, and stood. Kelpie, relieved of his weight, floated a little farther on to the shelf, got a better hold with her fore feet, some hold with her hind ones, and was beside him in a moment. The same moment Malcolm was on her back again, and they were tearing off eastward at full stretch. So far did the lessening point recede in the narrowing distance, that the two ladies sat down on the sand, and fell a-talking about Florimel's most uncategorical groom, as Clementina, herself the most uncategorical of women, to use her own scarcely justifiable epithet, called him. She asked if such persons abounded in Scotland. Florimel could but answer that this was the only one she had met with. Then she told her about Richmond Park and Lord Liftore and Epictetus.

"Ah, that accounts for him!" said Clementina. "Epictetus was a Cynic, a very cruel man: he broke his slave's leg once, I remember."

"Mr. Lenorme told me that *he* was the slave, and that his master broke *his* leg," said Florimel.

"Ah, yes! I daresay.—That *was* it. But it is of little consequence: his principles were severe, and your groom has been his too ready pupil. It is a pity he is such a savage: he might be quite an interesting character.—Can he read?"

"I have just told you of his reading Greek over Kelpie's head," said Florimel, laughing.

"Ah! but I meant English," returned Clementina, whose thoughts were a little astray. Then laughing at herself she explained: "—I mean, can he read aloud? I put the last of the Waverley novels in the box we shall have to-morrow, or the next day at latest, I hope; and I was wondering whether he could read the Scotch—as it ought to be read. I have never heard it spoken, and I don't know how to imagine it."

"We can try him," said Florimel. "It will be great fun anyhow. He is *such* a character! You will be *so* amused with the remarks he will make!"

"But can you venture to let him talk to you?"

"If you ask him to read, how will you prevent him? Unfortunately he has thoughts, and they *will* out."

"Is there no danger of his being rude?"

"If speaking his mind about anything in the book be rudeness, he will most likely be rude. Any other kind of rudeness is as impossible to Malcolm as to any gentleman in the land."

"How can you be so sure of him?" said Clementina, a little anxious as to the way in which her friend regarded the young man.

"My father was—yes, I may say so—attached to him—so much so that he—I can't quite say what—but something like made him promise never to leave my service. And this I know for myself, that not once, ever since that man came to us, has he done a selfish thing or one to be ashamed of. I could give you proof after proof of his devotion."

Florimel's warmth did not reassure Clementina; and her uneasiness wrought to the prejudice of Malcolm. She was never quite so generous towards human beings as towards

animals. She could not be depended on for justice except to people in trouble, and then she was very apt to be unjust to those who troubled them.

"I would not have you place too much confidence in your Admirable Crichton of menials, Florimel," she said. "There is something about him I cannot get at the bottom of. Depend upon it, a man who can be cruel would betray on the least provocation."

Florimel smiled superior—as she had good reason to do; but Clementina did not understand the smile, and therefore did not like it. She feared the young fellow had already gained too much influence over his mistress.

"Florimel, my love," she said, "listen to me. Your experience is not so ripe as mine. That man is not what you think him. One day or other he will, I fear, make himself worse than disagreeable. How *can* a cruel man be unselfish?"

"I don't think him cruel at all. But then I haven't such a soft heart for animals as you. We should think it silly in Scotland. You wouldn't teach a dog manners at the expense of a howl.

You would let him be a nuisance rather than give him a cut with a whip. What a nice mother of children you will make, Clementina! That's how the children of good people are so often a disgrace to them."

"You are like all the rest of the Scotch I ever knew," said Lady Clementina: "the Scotch are always preaching! I believe it is in their blood. You are a nation of parsons. Thank goodness! my morals go no farther than doing as I would be done by. I want to see creatures happy about me. For my own sake even, I would never cause pang to person —it gives me such a pang myself."

"That's the way you are made, I suppose, Clementina," returned Florimel. "For me, my clay must be coarser. I don't mind a little pain myself, and I can't break my heart for it when I see it—except it be very bad—such as I should care about myself.—But here comes the tyrant."

Malcolm was pulling up his mare some hundred yards off. Even now she was unwilling to stop—but it was at last only from pure original objection to whatever was wanted of her. When

she did stand she stood stock still, breathing hard.

"I have actually succeeded in taking a little out of her at last, my lady," said Malcolm as he dismounted. "Have you got a bit of sugar in your pocket, my lady? She would take it quite gently now."

Florimel had none, but Clementina had, for she always carried sugar for her horse. Malcolm held the demoness very watchfully, but she took the sugar from Florimel's palm as neatly as an elephant, and let her stroke her nose over her wide red nostrils without showing the least of her usual inclination to punish a liberty with death. Then Malcolm rode her home, and she was at peace till the evening—when he took her out again.

CHAPTER X.

MOONLIGHT.

AND now followed a pleasant time. Wast-beach was the quietest of all quiet neighbourhoods; it was the loveliest of spring-summer weather; and the variety of scenery on moor, in woodland, and on coast, within easy reach of such good horse-women, was wonderful. The first day they rested the horses that would rest, but the next they were in the saddle immediately after an early breakfast. They took the forest way. In many directions were tolerably smooth rides cut, and along them they had good gallops, to the great delight of Florimel after the restraints of Rotten Row, where riding had seemed like dancing a minuet with a waltz in her heart. Malcolm, so far as human companionship went, found it dull, for Lady Clementina's groom re-

garded him with the contempt of superior age, the most contemptible contempt of all, seeing years are not the wisdom they ought to bring, and the first sign of that is modesty. Again and again his remarks tempted Malcolm to incite him to ride Kelpie, but conscience, the thought of the man's family, and the remembrance that it required all his youthful strength, and that it would therefore be the challenge of the strong to the weak, saved him from the sin, and he schooled himself to the endurance of middle-aged arrogance. For the learning of the lesson he had practice enough: they rode every day, and Griffith did not thaw; but the one thundering gallop he had every morning along the sands with Kelpie, whom* no ordinary day's work was enough to save from the heart-burning ferment of repressed activity, was both preparation and amends for the annoyance.

When his mistress mentioned the proposal of her friend with regard to the new novel, he at once expressed his willingness to attempt com-

* According to the grammars, I ought to have written *which*, but it will not do. I could, I think, tell why, but prefer leaving the question to the reader.

pliance, fearing only, he said, that his English would prove offensive and his Scotch unintelligible. The task was nowise alarming to him, for he had read aloud much to the schoolmaster, who had also insisted that he should read aloud when alone, especially verse, in order that he might get all the good of its outside as well as inside—its sound as well as thought, the one being the ethereal body of the other. And he had the best primary qualifications for the art, namely, a delight in the sounds of human speech, a value for the true embodiment of thought, and a good ear, mental as well as vocal, for the assimilation of sound to sense. After these came the quite secondary, yet valuable gift of a pleasant voice, manageable for inflection ; and with such an outfit, the peculiarities of his country's utterance, the long-drawn vowels, and the outbreak of feeling in chant-like tones and modulations, might be forgiven, and certainly were forgiven by Lady Clementina, who, even in his presence, took his part against the objections of his mistress. On the whole, they were so much pleased with his first reading, which took place

the very day the box arrived, that they concluded to restrain the curiosity of their interest in persons and events, for the sake of the pleasure of meeting them always in the final fulness of local colour afforded them by his utterance. While he read, they busied their fingers with their embroidery; for as yet that graceful work, so lovelily described by Cowper in his *Task*, had not begun to vanish before the crude colours and mechanical vulgarity of Berlin wool, now happily in its turn vanishing like a dry dust-cloud into the limbo of the art-universe:

> the well-depicted flower,
> Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
> Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
> And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
> Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
> A wreath, that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
> With most success when all besides decay.*

There was not much of a garden about the place, but there was a little lawn amongst the pines, in the midst of which stood a huge old patriarch, with red stem and grotesquely contorted branches: beneath it was a bench, and there, after their return from their two hours' ride, the ladies sat, while the sun was at its

* The Winter Evening.

warmest, on the mornings of their first and second readings: Malcolm sat on a wheelbarrow. After lunch on the second day, which they had agreed from the first, as ladies so often do when free of the more devouring sex, should be their dinner, and after due visits paid to a multitude of animals, the desire awoke simultaneously in them for another portion of St. Ronan's Well. They resolved therefore to send for their reader as soon as they had had tea. But when they sent, he was nowhere to be found, and they concluded on a stroll.

Anticipating no further requirement of his service that day, Malcolm had gone out. Drawn by the sea, he took his way through the dim solemn boughless wood, as if to keep a moonlight tryst with his early love. But the sun was not yet down, and among the dark trees, shot through by the level radiance, he wandered, his heart swelling in his bosom with the glory and the mystery. Again the sun was *in* the wood, its burning centre, the marvel of the home which he left in the morning only to return thither at night, and it was now a temple of red light, more gorgeous, more dream-woven

than in the morning. How he glowed on the red stems of the bare pines, fit pillars for that which seemed temple and rite, organ and anthem in one—the worship of the earth, uplifted to its Hyperion! It was a world of faery; anything might happen in it. Who, in that region of marvel, would start to see suddenly a knight on a great sober war horse come slowly pacing down the torrent of carmine splendour, flashing it, like the Knight of the Sun himself, in a flood from every hollow, a gleam from every flat, and a star from every round and knob of his armour? As the trees thinned away, and his feet sank deeper in the looser sand, and the sea broke blue out of the infinite, talking quietly to itself of its own solemn swell into being out of the infinite thought unseen, Malcolm felt as if the world with its loveliness and splendour were sinking behind him, and the cool entrancing sweetness of the eternal dreamland of the soul, where the dreams are more real than any sights of the world, were opening wide before his entering feet. "Shall not death be like this?" he said, and threw himself on the sand, and hid his face and his

eyes from it all. For there is this strange thing about all glory embodied in the material, that, when the passion of it rises to its height, we hurry from its presence that its idea may perfect itself in silent and dark and deaf delight. Of its material self we want no more: its real self we have, and it sits at the fountain of our tears. Malcolm hid his face from the source of his gladness, and worshipped the source of that source.

Rare as they are at any given time, there have been, I think, such youths in all ages of the world—youths capable of glorying in the fountain whence issues the torrent of their youthful might. Nor is the reality of their early worship blasted for us by any mistral of doubt that may afterwards blow upon their spirit from the icy region of the understanding. The cold fevers, the vital agues that such winds breed, can but prove that not yet has the sun of the perfect arisen upon them; that the Eternal has not yet manifested himself in all regions of their being; that a grander, more obedient, therefore more blissful, more absorbing worship yet, is possible, nay, essential to

them. These chills are but the shivers of the divine nature, unsatisfied, half-starved, banished from its home, divided from its origin, after which it calls in groanings it knows not how to shape into sounds articulate. They are the spirit-wail of the holy infant after the bosom of its mother. Let no man long back to the bliss of his youth—but forward to a bliss that shall swallow even that, and contain it, and be more than it. Our history moves in cycles, it is true, ever returning toward the point whence it started; but it is in the imperfect circles of a spiral it moves; it returns—but ever to a point above the former: even the second childhood, at which the fool jeers, is the better, the truer, the fuller childhood, growing strong to cast off altogether, with the husk of its own enveloping age, that of its family, its country, its world as well. Age is not all decay: it is the ripening, the swelling of the fresh life within, that withers and bursts the husk.

When Malcolm lifted his head, the sun had gone down. He rose and wandered along the sand towards the moon—at length blooming

out of the darkening sky, where she had hung all day like a washed-out rag of light, to revive as the sunlight faded. He watched the banished life of her day-swoon returning, until, gathering courage, she that had been no one, shone out fair and clear, in conscious queendom of the night. Then, in the friendly infolding of her dreamlight and the dreamland it created, Malcolm's soul revived as in the comfort of the lesser, the mitigated glory, and, as the moon into radiance from the darkened air, and the nightingale into music from the sleep-stilled world of birds, blossomed from the speechlessness of thought and feeling into a strange kind of brooding song. If the words were half nonsense, the feeling was not the less real. Such as they were, they came almost of themselves, and the tune came with them.

Rose o' my hert,
  Open yer leaves to the lampin' mune;
Into the curls lat her keek an' dert;
  She'll tak' the colour but gi'e ye tune.

Buik o' my brain,
  Open yer neuks to the starry signs;
Lat the een o' the holy luik an' strain
  An' glimmer an' score atween the lines.

Cup o' my sowl,
  Gowd an' diamond an' ruby cup,
Ye're noucht ava but a toom dry bowl,
  Till the wine o' the kingdom fill ye up.

Conscience-glass,
  Mirror the infinite all in thee;
Melt the bounded and make it pass
  Into the tideless, shoreless sea.

World of my life,
  Swing thee round thy sunny track;
Fire and wind and water and strife—
  Carry them all to the glory back.

Ever as he halted for a word, the moonlight, and the low sweet waves on the sands, filled up the pauses to his ear; and there he lay, looking up to the sky and the moon and the rose-diamond stars, his thought half-dissolved in feeling, and his feeling half-crystalised to thought.

Out of the dim wood came two lovely forms into the moonlight, and softly approached him —so softly that he knew nothing of their nearness until Florimel spoke.

"Is that MacPhail?" she said.

"Yes, my lady," answered Malcolm, and bounded to his feet.

"What were you singing?"

"You could hardly call it singing, my lady. We should call it crooning in Scotland."

"Croon it again then."

"I couldn't, my lady. It's gone."

"You don't mean to pretend that you were extemporizing?"

"I was crooning what came—like the birds, my lady. I couldn't have done it if I had thought anyone was near." Then, half ashamed, and anxious to turn the talk from the threshold of his secret chamber, he said, "Did you ever see a lovelier night, ladies?"

"Not often, certainly," answered Clementina.

She was not quite pleased and not altogether offended at his addressing them dually. A curious sense of impropriety in the state of things bewildered her—she and her friend talking thus, in the moonlight, on the sea-shore, doing nothing, with her friend's groom—and such a groom, his mistress asking him to sing again, and he addressing them both with a remark on the beauty of the night! She had braved the world a good deal, but she did not choose to brave it where nothing was to be had, and she was too honest to say to herself that the world

would never know—that there was nothing to brave : she was not one to do that in secret to which she would not hold her face. Yet all the time she had a doubt whether this youug man, whom it would certainly be improper to encourage by addressing from any level but one of lofty superiority, did not belong to a higher sphere than theirs; while certainly no man could be more unpresuming, or less forward even when opposing his opinion to theirs. Still—if an angel were to come down and take charge of their horses, would ladies be justified in treating him as other than a servant?

"This is just the sort of night," Malcolm resumed, "when I could almost persuade myself I was not quite sure I wasn't dreaming. It makes a kind of border land betwixt waking and sleeping, knowing and dreaming, in our brain. In a night like this I fancy we feel something like the colour of what God feels when he is making the lovely chaos of a new world, a new kind of world, such as has never been before."

"I think we had better go in," said Clementina to Florimel, and turned away.

Florimel made no objection, and they walked towards the wood.

"You really must get rid of him as soon as you can," said Clementina, when again the moonless night of the pines had received them: "he is certainly more than half a lunatic. It is almost full moon now," she added, looking up. "I have never seen him so bad."

Florimel's clear laugh rang through the wood.

"Don't be alarmed, Clementina," she said. "He has talked like that ever since I knew him; and if he is mad, at least he is no worse than he has always been. It is nothing but poetry—yeast on the brain, my father used to say. We should have a fish-poet of him—a new thing in the world, he said. He would never be cured till he broke out in a book of poetry. I should be afraid my father would break the catechism and not rest in his grave till the resurrection, if I were to send Malcolm away."

For Malcolm, he was at first not a little mazed at the utter blankness of the wall against which his words had dashed them-

selves. Then he smiled queerly to himself, and said:

"I used to think ilka bonny lassie bude to be a poetess—for hoo sud she be bonnie but by the informin' hermony o' her bein'?—an' what's that but the poetry o' *the* Poet, the Makar, as they ca'd a poet i' the auld Scots tongue?—but haith! I ken better an' waur noo! There's gane the twa bonniest *I* ever saw, an' I s' lay my heid there's mair poetry in auld man-faced Miss Horn nor in a dizzin like them. Ech! but it's some sair to bide. It's sair upon a man to see a bonny wuman 'at has nae poetry, nae inward lichtsome hermony in her. But it's dooms sairer yet to come upo' ane wantin' cowmon sense! Saw onybody ever sic a gran' sicht as my Leddy Clementina!—an' wha can say but she's weel named frae the hert oot?—as guid at the hert, I'll sweir, as at the een! but eh me! to hear the blether o' nonsense 'at comes oot atween thae twa bonny yetts o' music—an' a' 'cause she winna gi'e her hert rist an' time eneuch to grow bigger, but maun aye be settin' at things right afore their time, an' her ain fitness for the job! It's sic a faithless

kin' o' a w'y that! I cud jist fancy I saw her gaein' a' roon' the trees o' a simmer nicht, pittin' hiney upo' the peers an' the peaches, 'cause she cudna lippen to natur' to ripe them sweet eneuch—only 'at she wad never tak the hiney frae the bees. She's jist the pictur' o' Natur' hersel' turnt some dementit. I cud jist fancy I saw her gaein' aboot amo' the ripe corn, on sic a nicht as this o' the mune, happin' 't frae the frost. An' I s' warran' no ae mesh in oor nets wad she lea' ohn clippit open gien the twine had a herrin' by the gills. She's e'en sae pitifu' owre the sinner 'at she winna gi'e him a chance o' growin' better. I won'er gien she believes 'at there's ae great thoucht abune a', an' aneth a', an' roon' a', an' in a'thing. She cudna be in sic a mist o' benevolence and parritch-hertitness gien she cud lippen till a wiser. It's na'e won'er she kens naething aboot poetry but the meeserable sids an' sawdist an' leavin's the gran' leddies sing an' ca' sangs! Nae mair is 't ony won'er she sud tak' me for dementit, gien she h'ard what I was singin'! only I canna think she did that, for I was but croonin' till mysel'."—Malcolm was wrong there,

for he was singing out loud and clear.—"That was but a kin' o' an unknown tongue atween Him an' me an' no anither."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SWIFT.

FLORIMEL succeeded so far in reassuring her friend as to the safety if not sanity of her groom, that she made no objection to yet another reading from St. Ronan's Well—upon which occasion an incident occurred that did far more to reassure her than all the attestations of his mistress.

Clementina, in consenting, had proposed, it being a warm sunny afternoon, that they should that time go down to the lake, and sit with their work on the bank, while Malcolm read. This lake, like the whole place, and some of the people in it, was rather strange—not resembling any piece of water that Malcolm at least had ever seen. More than a mile in length, but quite narrow, it lay on the seashore—a lake of deep fresh water, with nothing

between it and the sea but a bank of sand, up which the great waves came rolling in south-westerly winds, one now and then toppling over—to the disconcerting, no doubt, of the pikey multitude within.

The head only of the mere came into Clementina's property, and they sat on the landward side of it, on a sandy bank, among the half-exposed roots of a few ancient firs, where a little stream that fed the lake had made a small gully, and was now trotting over a bed of pebbles in the bottom of it. Clementina was describing to Florimel the peculiarities of the place, how there was no outlet to the lake, how the water went filtering through the sand into the sea, how in some parts it was very deep, and what large pike there were in it. Malcolm sat a little aside as usual, with his face towards the ladies, and the book open in his hand, waiting a sign to begin, but looking at the lake, which here was some fifty yards broad, reedy at the edge, dark and deep in the centre. All at once he sprang to his feet, dropping the book, ran down to the brink of the water, undoing his buckled belt

and pulling off his coat as he ran, threw himself over the bordering reeds into the pool, and disappeared with a great splash. Clementina gave a scream, and started up with distraction in her face: she made no doubt that, in the sudden ripeness of his insanity, he had committed suicide. But Florimel, though startled by her friend's cry, laughed, and crowded out assurances that Malcolm knew well enough what he was about. It was longer, however, than even she found pleasant, before a black head appeared—yards away, for he had risen at a great slope, swimming towards the other side. What *could* he be after? Near the middle he swam more softly, and almost stopped. Then first they spied a small dark object on the surface. Almost the same moment it rose into the air. They thought Malcolm had flung it up. Instantly they perceived that it was a bird—a swift. Somehow it had dropped into the water, but a lift from Malcolm's hand had restored it to the air of its bliss.

But instead of turning and swimming back, Malcolm held on, and getting out on the farther side, ran down the beach, and rushed into the

sea, rousing once more the apprehensions of Clementina. The shore sloped rapidly, and in a moment he was in deep water. He swam a few yards out, swam ashore again, ran round the end of the lake, found his coat, and got from it his pocket-handkerchief. Having therewith dried his hands and face, he wrung out the sleeves of his shirt a little, put on his coat, returned to his place, and said, as he took up the book and sat down,

"I beg your pardon, my ladies; but just as I heard my Lady Clementina say *pikes,* I saw the little swift in the water. There was no time to lose. Swiftie had but a poor chance."

As he spoke he proceeded to find the place in the book.

"You don't imagine we are going to have you read in such a plight as that!" cried Clementina.

"I will take good care, my lady. I have books of my own, and I handle them like babies."

"You foolish man! It is of you in your wet clothes, not of the book I am thinking," said Clementina indignantly.

"I'm much obliged to you, my lady, but there's no fear of me. You saw me wash the fresh water out. Salt water never hurts."

"You must go and change nevertheless," said Clementina.

Malcolm looked to his mistress. She gave him a sign to obey, and he rose. He had taken three steps towards the house when Clementina recalled him.

"One word, if you please," she said. "How is it that a man who risks his life for that of a little bird, can be so heartless to a great noble creature like that horse of yours? I cannot understand it!"

"My lady," returned Malcolm with a smile, "I was no more risking my life than you would be in taking a fly out of the milk-jug. And for your question, if your ladyship will only think, you cannot fail to see the difference. Indeed I explained my treatment of Kelpie to your ladyship that first morning in the park, when you so kindly rebuked me for it, but I don't think your ladyship listened to a word I said."

Clementina's face flushed, and she turned to

her friend with a "Well!" in her eyes. But Florimel kept her head bent over her embroidery; and Malcolm, no further notice being taken of him, walked away.

CHAPTER XII.

ST. RONAN'S WELL.

THE next day the reading was resumed, and for several days was regularly continued. Each day, as their interest grew, longer time was devoted to it. They were all simple enough to accept what the author gave them. nor, had a critic of the time been present to instruct them that in this last he had fallen off, would they have heeded him much: for Malcolm, it was the first story by the Great Unknown he had seen. A question however occurring, not of art but of morals, he was at once on the alert. It arose when they reached that portion of the tale in which the true heir to an earldom and its wealth offers to leave all in the possession of the usurper, on the one condition of his ceasing to annoy a certain lady, whom, by villainy of the worst, he had gained the power

of rendering unspeakably miserable. Naturally enough, at this point Malcolm's personal interest was suddenly excited: here were elements strangely correspondent with the circumstances of his present position. Tyrrel's offer of acquiescence in things as they were, and abandonment of his rights, which, in the story, is so amazing to the man of the world to whom it is first propounded, drew an exclamation of delight from both ladies—from Clementina be cause of its unselfishness, from Florimel because of its devotion: neither of them was at any time ready to raise a moral question, and least of all where the heart approved. But Malcolm was interested after a different fashion from theirs. Often during the reading he had made remarks and given explanations—not so much to the annoyance of Lady Clementina as she had feared, for since his rescue of the swift, she had been more favourably disposed towards him, and had judged him a little more justly—not that she understood him, but that the gulf between them had contracted. He paused a moment, then said:

"Do you think it was right, my ladies?

Ought Mr. Tyrrel to have made such an offer?"

"It was most generous of him," said Clementina, not without indignation—and with the tone of one whose answer should decide the question.

"Splendidly generous," replied Malcolm; "—but—I so well remember when Mr. Graham first made me see that the question of duty does not always lie between a good thing and a bad thing: there would be no room for casuistry then, he said. A man has very often to decide between one good thing and another. But indeed I can hardly tell without more time to think, whether that comes in here. If a man wants to be generous, it must at least be at his own expense."

"But surely," said Florimel, not in the least aware that she was changing sides, "a man ought to hold by the rights that birth and inheritance give him."

"That is by no means so clear, my lady," returned Malcolm, "as you seem to think. A man *may* be bound to hold by things that are his rights, but certainly not because they are rights. One of the grandest things in having

rights is that, being your rights, you may give them up—except, of course, they involve duties with the performance of which the abnegation would interfere."

"I have been trying to think," said Lady Clementina, "what can be the two good things here to choose between."

"That is the right question, and logically put, my lady," rejoined Malcolm, who, from his early training, could not help sometimes putting on the schoolmaster. "The two good things are—let me see—yes—on the one hand the protection of the lady to whom he owed all possible devotion of man to woman, and on the other what he owed to his tenants, and perhaps to society in general—yes—as the owner of wealth and position. There is generosity on the one side and dry duty on the other."

"But this was no case of mere love to the lady, I think," said Clementina. "Did Mr. Tyrrel not owe Miss Mowbray what reparation lay in his power? Was it not his tempting of her to a secret marriage, while yet she was nothing more than a girl, that brought the mischief upon her?"

"That is the point," said Malcolm, "that makes the one difficulty. Still, I do not see how there can be much of a question. He could have no right to do fresh wrong for the mitigation of the consequences of preceding wrong—to sacrifice others to atone for injuries done by himself."

"Where would be the wrong to others?" said Florimel, now back to her former position. "Why could it matter to tenants or society which of the brothers happened to be earl?"

"Only this, that, in the one case, the landlord of his tenants, the earl in society, would be an honourable man, in the other, a villain—a difference which might have consequences."

"But," said Lady Clementina, "is not generosity something more than duty—something higher, something beyond it?"

"Yes," answered Malcolm, "so long as it does not go against duty, but keeps in the same direction, is in harmony with it. I doubt much, though, whether, as we grow in what is good, we shall not come soon to see that generosity is but our duty, and nothing very grand and beyond it. But the man who chooses to be

generous at the expense of justice, even if he give up at the same time everything of his own, is but a poor creature beside him who, for the sake of the right, will not only consent to appear selfish in the eyes of men, but will go against his own heart, and the comfort of those dearest to him. The man who accepts a crown *may be* more noble than he who lays one down and retires to the desert. Of the worthies who do things by faith, some are sawn asunder, and some subdue kingdoms. The look of the thing is nothing."

Florimel made a neat little yawn over her work. Clementina's hands rested a moment in her lap, and she looked thoughtful. But she resumed her work, and said no more. Malcolm began to read again. Presently Clementina interrupted him. She had not been listening.

"Why should a man want to be better than his neighbours, any more than to be richer?" she said, as if uttering her thoughts aloud.

"Why, indeed," responded Malcolm, "except he wants to become a hypocrite?"

"Then, why do you talk for duty against generosity?"

"Oh!" said Malcolm, for a moment perplexed. He did not at once catch the relation of her ideas. "Does a man ever do his duty," he rejoined at length, "in order to be better than his neighbours? If he does, he won't do it long. A man does his duty because he must. He has no choice but do it."

"If a man has no choice, how is it that so many men choose to do wrong?" asked Clementina.

"In virtue of being slaves and stealing the choice," replied Malcolm.

"You are playing with words," said Clementina.

"If I am, at least I am not playing with things," returned Malcolm. "If you like it better, my lady, I will say that, in declaring he has no choice, the man with all his soul chooses the good, recognizing it as the very necessity of his nature."

"If I know in myself that I have a choice, all you say goes for nothing," persisted Clementina. "I am not at all sure I would not do wrong for the sake of another. The more one

preferred what was right, the greater would be the sacrifice."

"If it was for the grandeur of it, my lady, that would be for the man's own sake, not his friend's."

"Leave that out then," said Clementina.

"The more a man loved another, then—say a woman, as here in the story—it seems to me, the more willing would he be that she should continue to suffer rather than cease by wrong. Think, my lady: the essence of wrong is injustice: to help another by wrong is to do injustice to somebody you do not know well enough to love, for the sake of one you do know well enough to love. What honest man could think of that twice? The woman capable of accepting such a sacrifice would be contemptible."

"She need not know of it."

"He would know that she needed but to know of it to despise him."

"Then might it not be noble in him to consent for her sake to be contemptible in her eyes?"

"If no others were concerned. And then

there would be no injustice, therefore nothing wrong, and nothing contemptible."

"Might not what he did be wrong in the abstract, without having reference to any person?"

"There is no wrong man can do but is a thwarting of the living Right. Surely you believe, my lady, that there is a living Power of right, whose justice is the soul of our justice, who *will* have right done, and causes even our own souls to take up arms against us when we do wrong."

"In plain language, I suppose you mean—Do I believe in a God?"

"That is what I mean, if by a God you mean a being who cares about us, and loves justice—that is, fair play—one whom therefore we wrong to the very heart when we do a thing that is not just."

"I would gladly believe in such a being, if things were so that I could. As they are, I confess it seems to me the best thing to doubt it. I do doubt it very much. How can I help doubting it, when I see so much suffering, oppression, and cruelty in the world? If there

were such a being as you say, would he permit the horrible things we hear of on every hand?"

"I used to find that a difficulty. Indeed it troubled me sorely until I came to understand things better. I remember Mr. Graham saying once something like this—I did not understand it for months after: 'Every kind-hearted person who thinks a great deal of being comfortable, and takes prosperity to consist in being well-off, must be tempted to doubt the existence of a God.—And perhaps it is well they should be so tempted,' he added."

"Why did he add that?"

"I think because such are in danger of believing in an evil God. And if men believed in an evil God, and had not the courage to defy him, they must sink to the very depths of savagery. At least that is what I ventured to suppose he meant."

Clementina opened her eyes wide, but said nothing. Religious people, she found, could think as boldly as she.

"I remember all about it so well!" Malcolm added, thoughtfully. "We had been talking

about the Prometheus of Æschylus—how he would not give in to Jupiter."

"I am trying to understand," said Clementina, and ceased—and a silence fell which for a few moments Malcolm could not break. For suddenly he felt as if he had fallen under the power of a spell. Something seemed to radiate from her silence which invaded his consciousness. It was as if the wind which dwells in the tree of life had waked in the twilight of heaven, and blew upon his spirit. It was not that now first he saw that she was beautiful; the moment his eyes fell upon her that morning in the park, he saw her beautiful as he had never seen woman before. Neither was it that now first he saw her good; even in that first interview her heart had revealed itself to him as very lovely. But the foolishness which flowed from her lips, noble and unselfish as it was, had barred the way betwixt his feelings and her individuality as effectually as if she had been the loveliest of Venuses lying uncarved in the lunar marble of Carrara. There *are* men to whom silliness is an absolute freezing mixture; to whose hearts a plain, sensible woman at once appeals as a wo-

man, while no amount of beauty can serve as sweet oblivious antidote to counteract the nausea produced by folly. Malcolm had found Clementina irritating, and the more irritating that she was so beautiful. But at the first sound from her lips that indicated genuine and truthful thought, the atmosphere had begun to change; and at the first troubled gleam in her eyes, revealing that she pursued some dim-seen thing of the world of reality, a nameless potency throbbed into the spiritual space betwixt her and him, and embraced them in an aether of entrancing relation. All that had been needed to awake love to her was, that her soul, her self, should look out of its windows—and now at length he had caught a glimpse of it. Not all her beauty, not all her heart, not all her courage, could draw him while she would ride only a hobby-horse, however tight its skin might be stuffed with emotions. But now who could tell how soon she might be charging in the front line of the Amazons of the Lord—on as real a horse as any in the heavenly army? For was she not thinking—the rarest human operation in the world?

"I will try to speak a little more clearly, my lady," said Malcolm. "If ease and comfort, and the pleasures of animal and intellectual being, were the best things to be had, as they are the only things most people desire, then that maker who did not care that his creatures should possess or were deprived of such, could not be a good God. But if the need with the lack of such things should be the means, the only means, of their gaining something in its very nature so much better that——"

"But," interrupted Clementina, "if they don't care about anything better—if they are content as they are?"

"Should he then who called them into existence be limited in his further intents for the perfecting of their creation, by their notions concerning themselves who cannot add to their life one cubit?—such notions being often consciously dishonest? If he knows them worthless without something that he can give, shall he withhold his hand because they do not care that he should stretch it forth? Should a child not be taught to ride because he is content to run on foot?"

"But the means, according to your own theory, are so frightful!" said Clementina.

"But suppose he knows that the barest beginnings of the good he intends them would not merely reconcile them to those means, but cause them to choose his will at any expense of suffering! I tell you, Lady Clementina," continued Malcolm, rising, and approaching her a step or two, "if I had not the hope of one day being good like God himself, if I thought there was no escape out of the wrong and badness I feel within me and know I am not able to rid myself of without supreme help, not all the wealth and honours of the world could reconcile me to life."

"You do not know what you are talking of," said Clementina, coldly and softly, without lifting her head.

"I do," said Malcolm.

"You mean you would kill yourself but for your belief in God?"

"By life, I meant *being*, my lady. If there were no God, I dared not kill myself, lest worse should be waiting me in the awful voids

beyond. If there be a God, living or dying is all one—so it be what he pleases."

"I have read of saints," said Clementina, with cool dissatisfaction in her tone, "uttering such sentiments,"——"*Sentiments!*" said Malcolm to himself——"and I do not doubt such were felt or at least imagined by them; but I fail to understand how, even supposing these things true, a young man like yourself should, in the midst of a busy world, and with an occupation which, to say the least,——"

Here she paused. After a moment Malcolm ventured to help her.

"Is so far from an ideal one—would you say, my lady?"

"Something like that," answered Clementina, and concluded:—"I wonder how *you* can have arrived at such ideas."

"There is nothing wonderful in it, my lady," returned Malcolm. "Why should not a youth, a boy, a child, for as a child I thought about what the kingdom of heaven could mean, desire with all his might that his heart and mind should be clean, his will strong, his thoughts just, his head clear, his soul dwelling in the

place of life? Why should I not desire that my life should be a complete thing, and an outgoing of life to my neighbour? Some people are content not to do mean actions: I want to become incapable of a mean thought or feeling; and so I shall be before all is done."

"Still, how did you come to begin so much earlier than others?"

"All I know as to that, my lady, is that I had the best man in the world to teach me."

"And why did not I have such a man to teach me? I could have learned of such a man too."

"If you are able now, my lady, it does not follow that it would have been the best thing for you sooner. Some children learn far better for not being begun early, and will get before others who have been at it for years. As you grow ready for it, somewhere or other you will find what is needful for you—in a book, or a friend, or best of all in your own thoughts—the eternal thought speaking in your thought."

It flashed through her mind: "Can it be.

that I have found it now—on the lips of a groom ?"

Was it her own spirit or another that laughed strangely within her.

"Well, as you seem to know so much better than other people," she said, "I want you to explain to me how the God in whom you profess to believe can make use of such cruelties. It seems to me more like the revelling of a demon."

"My lady!" remonstrated Malcolm, "I never pretended to explain. All I say is, that, if I had reason for hoping there was a God, and if I found, from my own experience and the testimony of others, that suffering led to valued good, I should think, hope, expect to find that he caused suffering for reasons of the highest, purest, and kindest import, such as when understood must be absolutely satisfactory to the sufferers themselves. If a man cannot believe that, and if he thinks pain the worst evil of all, then of course he cannot believe there is a good God. Still, even then, if he would lay claim to being a lover of truth, he ought to give the idea—the mere *idea* of God fair play, lest there

should be a good God after all, and he all his life doing him the injustice of refusing him his trust and obedience."

"And how are we to give the mere idea of him fair play?" asked Clementina, rather contemptuously. But I think she was fighting emotion, confused and troublesome.

"By looking to the heart of whatever claims to be a revelation of him."

"It would take a lifetime to read the half of such."

"I will correct myself, and say—whatever of the sort has best claims on *your* regard—whatever any person you look upon as good, believes and would have you believe—at the same time doing diligently what you *know* to be right; for, if there be a God, that must be his will, and, if there be not, it remains our duty."

All this time, Florimel was working away at her embroidery, a little smile of satisfaction flickering on her face. She was pleased to hear her clever friend talking so with her strange vassal. As to what they were saying, she had no doubt it was all right, but to her it was not interesting. She was mildly de-

bating with herself whether she should tell her friend about Lenorme.

Clementina's work now lay on her lap and her hands on her work, while her eyes at one time gazed on the grass at her feet, at another searched Malcolm's face with a troubled look. The light of Malcolm's candle was beginning to penetrate into her dusky room, the power of his faith to tell upon the weakness of her unbelief. There is no strength in unbelief. Even the unbelief of what is false is no source of might. It is the truth shining from behind that gives the strength to disbelieve. But into the house where the refusal of the bad is followed by no embracing of the good—the house empty and swept and garnished—the bad will return, bringing with it seven evils that are worse.

If something of that sacred mystery, holy in the heart of the Father, which draws together the souls of man and woman, was at work between them, let those scoff at the mingling of love and religion who know nothing of either; but man or woman who, loving woman or man, has never in that love lifted the heart to the

Father, and everyone whose divine love has not yet cast at least an arm around the human love, must take heed what they think of themselves, for they are yet but paddlers in the tide of the eternal ocean. Love is a lifting no less than a swelling of the heart. What changes, what metamorphoses, transformations, purifications, glorifications, this or that love must undergo ere it take its eternal place in the kingdom of heaven, through all its changes yet remaining, in its one essential root, the same, let the coming redemption reveal. The hope of all honest lovers will lead them to the vision. Only let them remember that love must dwell in the will as well as in the heart.

But whatever the nature of Malcolm's influence upon Lady Clementina, she resented it, thinking towards and speaking to him repellently. Something in her did not like him. She knew he did not approve of her, and she did not like being disapproved of. Neither did she approve of him. He was pedantic—and far too good for an honest and brave youth: not that she could say she had seen dishonesty or cowardice in him, or that she could have told

which vice she would prefer to season his goodness withal, and bring him to the level of her ideal. And then, for all her theories of equality, he was a groom—therefore to a lady ought to be repulsive—at least when she found him intruding into the chambers of her thoughts—personally intruding—yes, and met there by some traitorous feelings whose behaviour she could not understand. She resented it all, and felt towards Malcolm as if he were guilty of forcing himself into the sacred presence of her bosom's queen—whereas it was his angel that did so, his Idea, over which he had no control. Clementina would have turned that Idea out, and when she found she could not, her soul started up wrathful, in maidenly disgust with her heart, and cast resentment upon everything in him whereon it would hang. She had not yet, however, come to ask herself any questions; she had only begun to fear that a woman to whom a person from the stables could be interesting, even in the form of an unexplained riddle, must be herself a person of low tastes; and that, for all her pride in coming of honest

people, there must be a drop of bad blood in her somewhere.

For a time her eyes had been fixed on her work, and there had been silence in the little group.

"My lady!" said Malcolm, and drew a step nearer to Clementina.

She looked up. How lovely she was with the trouble in her eyes! Thought Malcolm, "If only she were what she might be! If the form were but filled with the spirit! the body with life!"

"My lady!" he repeated, just a little embarrassed, "I should like to tell you one thing that came to me only lately—came to me when thinking over the hard words you spoke to me that day in the park. But it is something so awful that I dare not speak of it except you will make your heart solemn to hear it."

He stopped, with his eyes questioning hers. Clementina's first thought once more was madness, but as she steadily returned his look, her face grew pale, and she gently bowed her head in consent.

"I will try then," said Malcolm. "—Every-

body knows what few think about, that once there lived a man who, in the broad face of prejudiced respectability, truth-hating hypocrisy, common-place religion, and dull book-learning, affirmed that he knew the secret of life, and understood the heart and history of men—who wept over their sorrows, yet worshipped the God of the whole earth, saying that he had known him from eternal days. The same said that he came to do what the Father did, and that he did nothing but what he had learned of the Father. They killed him, you know, my lady, in a terrible way that one is afraid even to think of. But he insisted that he laid down his life; that he allowed them to take it. Now I ask whether that grandest thing, crowning his life, the yielding of it to the hand of violence, he had not learned also from his Father. Was his death the only thing he had not so learned? If I am right, and I do not say *if* in doubt, then the suffering of those three terrible hours was a type of the suffering of the Father himself in bringing sons and daughters through the cleansing and glorifying fires, without which the created cannot be made

the very children of God, partakers of the divine nature and peace. Then from the lowest, weakest tone of suffering, up to the loftiest pitch, the divinest acme of pain, there is not one pang to which the sensorium of the universe does not respond; never an untuneful vibration of nerve or spirit but thrills beyond the brain or the heart of the sufferer to the brain, the heart of the universe; and God, in the simplest, most literal, fullest sense, and not by sympathy alone, suffers *with* his creatures."

"Well, but he is able to bear it; they are not: I cannot bring myself to see the right of it."

"Nor will you, my lady, so long as you cannot bring yourself to see the good they get by it.—My lady, when I was trying my best with poor Kelpie, you would not listen to me."

"You are ungenerous," said Clementina, flushing.

"My lady," persisted Malcolm, "you would not understand me. You denied me a heart because of what seemed in your eyes cruelty. I knew that I was saving her from death at the least, probably from a life of torture: God may

be good, though to you his government may seem to deny it. There is but one way God cares to govern—the way of the Father-king—and that way is at hand.—But I have yet given you only the one half of my theory: If God feels pain, then he puts forth his will to bear and subject that pain: if the pain comes to him from his creature, living in him, will the endurance of God be confined to himself, and not, in its turn, pass beyond the bounds of his individuality, and react upon the sufferer to his sustaining? I do not mean that sustaining which a man feels from knowing his will one with God's and God *with* him, but such sustaining as those his creatures also may have who do not or cannot know whence the sustaining comes. I believe that the endurance of God goes forth to uphold, that his patience is strength to his creatures, and that, while the whole creation may well groan, its suffering is more bearable therefore than it seems to the repugnance of our regard."

"That is a dangerous doctrine," said Clementina.

"Will it then make the cruel man more cruel to be told that God is caring for the tortured

creature from the citadel of whose life he would force an answer to save his own from the sphinx that must at last devour him, let him answer ever so wisely? Or will it make the tender less pitiful to be consoled a little in the agony of beholding what they cannot alleviate? Many hearts are from sympathy as sorely in need of comfort as those with whom they suffer. And to such I have one word more—to your heart, my lady, if it will consent to be consoled: The animals, I believe, suffer less than we, because they scarcely think of the past, and not at all of the future. It is the same with children, Mr. Graham says; they suffer less than grown people, and for the same reason. To get back something of this privilege of theirs, we have to be obedient and take no thought for the morrow."

Clementina took up her work. Malcolm walked away.

"Malcolm," cried his mistress, "are you not going on with the book?"

"I hope your ladyship will excuse me," said Malcolm. "I would rather not read more just at present."

It may seem incredible that one so young as Malcolm should have been able to talk thus, and indeed my report may have given words more formal and systematic than his really were. For the *matter* of them, it must be remembered that he was not young in the effort to do and understand; and that the advantage to such a pupil of such a teacher as Mr. Graham is illimitable.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PERPLEXITY.

AFTER Malcolm's departure, Clementina attempted to find what Florimel thought of the things her strange groom had been saying: she found only that she neither thought at all about them, nor had a single true notion concerning the matter of their conversation. Seeking to interest her in it and failing, she found however that she had greatly deepened its impression upon herself.

Florimel had not yet quite made up her mind whether or not she should open her heart to Clementina, but she approached the door of it in requesting her opinion upon the matter of marriage between persons of social conditions widely parted—"frightfully sundered," she said. Now Clementina was a radical of her day, a reformer, a leveller—one who complained bitter-

ly that some should be so rich, and some so poor. In this she was perfectly honest. Her own wealth, from a vague sense of unrighteousness in the possession of it, was such a burden to her, that she threw it away where often it made other people stumble if not fall. She professed to regard all men as equal, and believed that she did so. She was powerful in her contempt of the distinctions made between certain of the classes, but had signally failed in some bold endeavours to act as if they had no existence except in the whims of society. As yet no man had sought her nearer regard for whom she would deign to cherish even friendship. As to marriage, she professed, right honestly, an entire disinclination, even aversion to it, saying to herself that if ever she should marry it must be, for the sake of protest and example, one notably beneath her in social condition. He must be a gentleman, but his claims to that rare distinction should lie only in himself, not his position, in what he was, not what he had. But it is one thing to have opinions, and another to be called upon to show them beliefs; it is one thing to declare all

men equal, and another to tell the girl who looks up to you for advice, that she ought to feel herself at perfect liberty to marry—say a groom; and when Florimel proposed the general question, Clementina might well have hesitated. And indeed she did hesitate—but in vain she tried to persuade herself that it was solely for the sake of her young and inexperienced friend that she did so. As little could she honestly say that it was from doubt of the principles she had so long advocated. Had Florimel been open with her, and told her what sort of inferior was in her thoughts, instead of representing the gulf between them as big enough to swallow the city of Rome; had she told her that he was a gentleman, a man of genius and gifts, noble and large-hearted, and indeed better-bred than any other man she knew, the fact of his profession would only have clenched Lady Clementina's decision in his favour; and if Florimel had been honest enough to confess the encouragement she had given him—nay, the absolute love-passages there had been, Clementina would at once have insisted that her friend should write an apology for her behaviour to him,

should dare the dastard world, and offer to marry him when he would. But, Florimel putting the question as she did, how should Clementina imagine anything other than that it referred to Malcolm? and a strange confusion of feeling was the consequence. Her thoughts heaved in her like the half-shaped monsters of a spiritual chaos, and amongst them was one she could not at all identify. A direct answer she found impossible. She found also that in presence of Florimel, so much younger than herself, and looking up to her for advice, she dared not even let the questions now pressing for entrance appear before her consciousness. She therefore declined giving an answer of any sort—was not prepared with one, she said; much was to be considered; no two cases were just alike.

They were summoned to tea, after which she retired to her room, shut the door, and began to think—an operation which, seldom easy if worth anything, was in the present case peculiarly difficult, both because Clementina was not used to it, and the subject-object of it was herself. I suspect that self-examination is seldom

the most profitable, certainly it is sometimes the most unpleasant, and always the most difficult of moral actions—that is, to perform after a genuine fashion. I know that very little of what passes for it has the remotest claim to reality; and I will not say it has never to be done; but I am certain that a good deal of the energy spent by some devout and upright people on trying to understand themselves and their own motives, would be expended to better purpose, and with far fuller attainment even in regard to that object itself, in the endeavour to understand God, and what he would have us do.

Lady Clementina's attempt was as honest as she dared make it. It went something after this fashion:

"How is it possible I should counsel a young creature like that, with all her gifts and privileges, to marry a groom—to bring the stable into her chamber? If I did—if she did, has she the strength to hold her face to it?—Yes, I know how different he is from any other groom that ever rode behind a lady! but does she understand him? Is she capable of such a regard

for him as could outlast a week of closer intimacy? At her age it is impossible she should know what she was doing in daring such a thing. It would be absolute ruin to her. And how could I advise her to do what I could not do myself?—But then if she is in love with him?"

She rose and paced the room—not hurriedly—she never did anything hurriedly—but yet with unleisurely steps, until, catching sight of herself in the glass, she turned away as from an intruding and unwelcome presence, and threw herself on her couch, burying her face in the pillow. Presently, however, she rose again, her face glowing, and again walked up and down the room—almost swiftly now. I can but indicate the course of her thoughts.

"If what he says be true!—It opens another and higher life.—What a man he is! and so young!—Has he not convicted me of feebleness and folly, and made me ashamed of myself?—What better thing could man or woman do for another than lower her in her own haughty eyes, and give her a chance of becoming such as she had but dreamed of the shadow of?—He is

a gentleman—every inch! Hear him talk! —Scotch, no doubt,—and—well—a *little* long-winded—a bad fault at his age! But see him ride!—see him swim!—and to save a bird!—But then he is hard—severe at best! All religious people are so severe! They think they are safe themselves, and so can afford to be hard on others! He would serve his wife the same as his mare, if he thought she required it!—And I *have* known women for whom it might be the best thing. I am a fool! a soft-hearted idiot! He told me I would give a baby a lighted candle if it cried for it.—Or didn't he? I believe he never uttered a word of the sort; he only thought it."—As she said this, there came a strange light in her eyes, and the light seemed to shine from all around them as well as from the orbs themselves.

Suddenly she stood still as a statue in the middle of the room, and her face grew white as the marble of one. For a minute she stood thus—without a definite thought in her brain. The first that came was something like this: "Then Florimel *does* love him!—and wants help to decide whether she shall marry him or

not! Poor weak little wretch!—Then if I were in love with him, I would marry him—would I?—It is well, perhaps, that I'm not!—But she! he is ten times too good for her! He would be utterly thrown away on her! But I am *her* counsel, not his; and what better could come to her than have such a man for a husband and instead of that contemptible Liftore, with his grand earldom ways and proud nose! He has little to be proud of that must take to his rank for it! Fancy a right man condescending to be proud of his own rank! Pooh! But this groom is a man! all a man! grand from the centre out, as the great God made him!—Yes, it must be a great God that made such a man as that!—that is, if he *is* the same he looks—the same all through!—Perhaps there are more Gods than one, and one of them is the devil, and made Liftore! But am I bound to give her advice? Surely not. I may refuse. And rightly too! A woman that marries from advice, instead of from a mighty love, is wrong. I need *not* speak. I shall just tell her to consult her own heart—and conscience, and follow them.—But, gracious me! am *I* then going

to fall in love with the fellow?—this stable-man who pretends to know his maker! Certainly not. There is *nothing* of the kind in my thoughts. Besides, how should *I* know what falling in love means? I never was in love in my life, and don't mean to be. If I were so foolish as imagine myself in any danger, would I be such a fool as be caught in it? I should think not indeed! What if I *do* think of this man in a way I never thought of anyone before, is there anything odd in that? How should I help it when he is unlike anyone I ever saw before? One must think of people as one finds them. Does it follow that I have power over myself no longer, and must go where any chance feeling may choose to lead me?"

Here came a pause. Then she started, and once more began walking up and down the room, now hurriedly indeed.

"I will *not* have it!" she cried aloud—and checked herself, dashed at the sound of her own voice. But her soul went on loud enough for the thought-universe to hear. "There *can't* be a God, or he would never subject his women to

what they don't choose. If a God had made them, he would have them queens over themselves at least—and I *will* be queen, and then perhaps a God did make me. A slave to things inside myself!—thoughts and feelings I refuse, and which I *ought* to have control over! I don't want this in me, yet I can't drive it out! I *will* drive it out. It is not me. A slave on my own ground! worst slavery of all!—It will not go.—That must be because I do not will it strong enough. And if I don't *will* it—my God!—what does that mean?—That I am a slave already?"

Again she threw herself on her couch, but only to rise and yet again pace the room.

"Nonsense! it is *not* love. It is merely that nobody could help thinking about one who had been so much before her mind for so long—one too who had made her think. Ah! there, I do believe, lies the real secret of it all!—There's the main cause of my trouble—and nothing worse! I must not be foolhardy though, and remain in danger, especially as, for anything I can tell, he may be in love with that foolish child. People, they say, like people that are

not at all like themselves. Then I am sure he might like me!—She *seems* to be in love with him! I know she cannot be half a quarter in real love with him: it's not in her."

She did not rejoin Florimel that evening: it was part of the understanding between the ladies that each should be at absolute liberty. She slept little during the night, starting awake as often as she began to slumber, and before the morning came was a good deal humbled. All sorts of means are kept at work to make the children obedient and simple and noble. Joy and sorrow are servants in God's nursery; pain and delight, ecstasy and despair, minister in it; but amongst them there is none more marvellous in its potency than that mingling of all pains and pleasures to which we specially give the name of Love.

When she appeared at breakfast, her countenance bore traces of her suffering, but a headache, real enough, though little heeded in the commotion upon whose surface it floated, gave answer to the not very sympathetic solicitude of Florimel. Happily the day of their return was near at hand. Some talk there had been

of protracting their stay, but to that Clementina avoided any farther allusion. She must put an end to an intercourse which she was compelled to admit was, at least, in danger of becoming dangerous. This much she had with certainty discovered concerning her own feelings, that her head grew hot and her heart cold at the thought of the young man belonging more to the mistress who could not understand him than to herself who imagined she could ; and it wanted no experience in love to see that it was therefore time to be on her guard against herself, for to herself she was growing perilous.

CHAPTER XIV.

THH MIND OF THE AUTHOR.

THE next was the last day of the reading. They must finish the tale that morning, and on the following set out to return home, travelling as they had come. Clementina had not the strength of mind to deny herself that last indulgence—a long four days' ride in the company of this strangest of attendants. After that, if not the deluge, yet a few miles of Sahara.

"'It is the opinion of many that he has entered into a Moravian mission, for the use of which he had previously drawn considerable sums,'" read Malcolm, and paused, with book half closed.

"Is that all?" asked Florimel.

"Not quite, my lady," he answered. "There isn't much more, but I was just thinking

whether we hadn't come upon something worth a little reflection—whether we haven't here a window into the mind of the author of Waverley, whoever he may be, Mr. Scott, or another."

"You mean?" said Clementina, interrogatively, and looked up from her work, but not at the speaker.

"I mean, my lady, that perhaps we here get a glimpse of the author's own opinions, or feelings rather, perhaps."

"I do not see what of the sort you can find there," returned Clementina.

"Neither should I, my lady, if Mr. Graham had not taught me how to find Shakspere in his plays. A man's own nature, he used to say, must lie at the heart of what he does, even though not another man should be sharp enough to find him there. Not a hypocrite, the most consummate, he would say, but has his hypocrisy written in every line of his countenance and motion of his fingers. The heavenly Lavaters can read it, though the earthly may not be able."

"And you think you can find him out?" said Clementina, dryly.

"Not the hypocrite, my lady, but Mr. Scott here. He is only round a single corner. And one thing is—he believes in a God."

"How do you make that out?"

"He means this Mr. Tyrrel for a fine fellow, and on the whole approves of him--does he not, my lady?"

"Certainly."

"Of course all that duelling is wrong. But then Mr. Scott only half disapproves of it.—And it is almost a pity it is wrong," remarked Malcolm with a laugh; "it is such an easy way of settling some difficult things. Yet I hate it. It's so cowardly. I may be a better shot than the other, and know it all the time. He may know it too, and have twice my courage. And I may think him in the wrong, when he *knows* himself in the right.—There *is* one man I have felt as if I should like to kill. When I was a boy I killed the cats that ate my pigeons."

A look of horror almost distorted Lady Clementina's countenance.

"I don't know what to say next, my lady," he went on, with a smile, "because I have no way of telling whether you looked shocked for

the cats I killed, or the pigeons they killed, or the man I would rather see killed than have him devour more of my—white doves," he concluded sadly, with a little shake of the head.—"But, please God," he resumed, "I shall manage to keep them from him, and let him live to be as old as Methuselah if he can, even if he should grow in cunning and wickedness all the time. I wonder how he will feel when he comes to see what a sneaking cat he is. But this is not what we set out for.—Mr. Tyrrel, then, the author's hero, joins the Moravians at last."

"What are they?" questioned Clementina.

"Simple, good, practical Christians, I believe," answered Malcolm.

"But he only does it when disappointed in love."

"No, my lady; he is not disappointed. The lady is only dead."

Clementina stared a moment—then dropped her head as if she understood. Presently she raised it again and said,

"But, according to what you said the other day, in doing so he was forsaking altogether

the duties of the station in which God had called him."

"That is true. It would have been a far grander thing to do his duty where he was, than to find another place and another duty. An earldom allotted is better than a mission preferred."

"And at least you must confess," interrupted Clementina, "that he only took to religion because he was unhappy."

"Certainly, my lady, it is the nobler thing to seek God in the days of gladness, to look up to him in trustful bliss when the sun is shining. But if a man be miserable, if the storm *is* coming down on him, what is he to do? There is nothing mean in seeking God then, though it would have been nobler to seek him before.—But to return to the matter in hand: the author of Waverley makes his noble-hearted hero, whom assuredly he had no intention of disgracing, turn Moravian; and my conclusion from it is that, in his judgment, nobleness leads in the direction of religion; that he considers it natural for a noble mind to seek comfort there for its deepest sorrows."

"Well, it may be so; but what is religion without consistency in action?" said Clementina.

"Nothing," answered Malcolm.

"Then how can you, professing to believe as you do, cherish such feelings towards any man as you have just been confessing?"

"I don't cherish them, my lady. But I succeed in avoiding hate better than in suppressing contempt, which perhaps is the worse of the two. There may be some respect in hate."

Here he paused, for here was a chance that was not likely to recur. He might say before two ladies what he could not say before one. If he could but rouse Florimel's indignation! Then at any suitable time only a word more would be needful to direct it upon the villain. Clementina's eyes continued fixed upon him. At length he spoke.

"I will try to make two pictures in your mind, my lady, if you will help me to paint them. In *my* mind they are not *painted* pictures.—A long sea-coast, my lady, and a stormy night; —the sea-horses rushing in from the north-east, and the snowflakes beginning to fall. On the

margin of the sea a long dune or sand-bank, and on the top of it, her head bare, and her thin cotton dress nearly torn from her by the wind, a young woman, worn and white, with an old faded tartan shawl tight about her shoulders, and the shape of a baby inside it upon her arm."

"Oh! she doesn't mind the cold," said Florimel. "When I was there, I didn't mind it a bit."

"She does not mind the cold," answered Malcolm; "she is far too miserable for that."

"But she has no business to take the baby out on such a night," continued Florimel, carelessly critical. "You ought to have painted her by the fireside. They have all of them firesides to sit at. I have seen them through the windows many a time."

"Shame or cruelty had driven her from it," said Malcolm, "and there she was."

"Do you mean you saw her yourself wandering about?" asked Clementina.

"Twenty times, my lady."

Clementina was silent.

"Well, what comes next?" said Florimel.

"Next comes a young gentleman;—but this is a picture in another frame, although of the same night;—a young gentleman in evening dress, sipping his madeira, warm and comfortable, in the bland temper that should follow the best of dinners, his face beaming with satisfaction after some boast concerning himself, or with silent success in the concoction of one or two compliments to have at hand when he joins the ladies in the drawing-room."

"Nobody can help such differences," said Florimel. "If there were nobody rich, who would there be to do anything for the poor? It's not the young gentleman's fault that he is better born and has more money than the poor girl."

"No," said Malcolm; "but what if the poor girl has the young gentleman's child to carry about from morning to night?"

"Oh, well! I suppose she's paid for it," said Florimel, whose innocence must surely have been supplemented by some stupidity, born of her flippancy.

"Do be quiet, Florimel," said Clementina. "You don't know what you are talking about."

Her face was in a glow, and one glance at it

set Florimel's in a flame. She rose without a word, but with a look of mingled confusion and offence, and walked away. Clementina gathered her work together. But ere she followed her, she turned to Malcolm, looked him calmly in the face, and said,

"No one can blame you for hating such a man."

"Indeed, my lady, but some one would—the only one for whose praise or blame we ought to care more than a straw or two. He tells us we are neither to judge nor to hate. But——"

"I cannot stay and talk with you," said Clementina. "You must pardon me if I follow your mistress."

Another moment and he would have told her all, in the hope of her warning Florimel. But she was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIDE HOME.

FLORIMEL was offended with Malcolm: he had put her confidence in him to shame, speaking of things to which he ought not once to have even alluded. But Clementina was not only older than Florimel, but, in her loving endeavours for her kind, had heard many a pitiful story, and was now saddened by the tale, not shocked at the teller. Indeed, Malcolm's mode of acquainting her with the grounds of the feeling she had challenged, pleased both her heart, and her sense of what was becoming; while, as a partisan of women, finding a man also of their part, she was ready to offer him the gratitude of all womankind in her one typical self. "What a rough diamond is here!" she thought. "Rough!" echoed her heart: "how is he rough? What fault could the

most fastidious find with his manners? True, he speaks as a servant—and where would be his manners if he did not? But neither in tone, expression, nor way of thinking, is he in the smallest degree servile. He is like a great pearl, clean out of the sea—bred, it is true, in the midst of strange surroundings, but pure as the moonlight; and if a man, so environed, yet has grown so grand, what might he not become with such privileges as——!"

Good Clementina—what did she mean? Did she imagine that such mere gifts as she might give him, could do for him more than the great sea, with the torment and conquest of its winds and tempests? more than his own ministrations of love, and victories over passion and pride? What the final touches of the shark-skin are to the marble that stands lord of the flaming bow, that only can wealth and position be to the man who has yielded neither to the judgments of the world nor the drawing of his own inclinations, and so has submitted himself to the chisel and mallet of his maker. Society is the barber who trims a man's hair, often very badly too—and pretends he made it

grow. If her owner should take her, body and soul, and make of her being a gift to his—ah, then indeed! But Clementina was not yet capable of perceiving that, while what she had in her thought to offer *might* hurt him, it *could* do him little good. Her feeling concerning him, however, was all the time far indeed from folly. Not for a moment did she imagine him in love with her. Possibly she admired him too much to attribute to him such an intolerable and insolent presumption as that would have appeared to her own inferior self. Still, she was far indeed from certain, were she, as befits the woman so immeasurably beyond even the aspiration of the man, to make him offer implicit of hand and havings, that he would reach out his to take them. And certainly that she was not going to do!—in which determination, whether she knew it or not, there was as much modesty and gracious doubt of her own worth as there was pride and maidenly recoil. In one resolve she was confident, that her behaviour towards him should be such as to keep him just where he was, affording him no smallest excuse for taking one step nearer: and

they would soon be in London, where she would see nothing, or next to nothing more of him. But should she ever cease to thank God, that was, if ever she came to find him, that in this groom he had shown her what he could do in the way of making a man! Heartily she wished she knew a nobleman or two like him. In the meantime she meant to enjoy—with carefulness—the ride to London, after which things should be as before.

The morning arrived; they finished breakfast; the horses came round and stood at the door—all but Kelpie. The ladies mounted. Ah, what a morning to leave the country and go back to London! The sun shone clear on the dark pine-woods; the birds were radiant in song; all under the trees the ferns were unrolling each its mystery of ever generating life; the soul of the summer was there, whose mere idea sends the heart into the eyes, while itself flits mocking from the cage of words. A gracious mystery it was—in the air, in the sun, in the earth, in their own hearts. The lights of heaven mingled and played with the shadows of the earth, which looked like the

souls of the trees, that had been out wandering all night, and had been overtaken by the sun ere they could re-enter their dark cells. Every motion of the horses under them was like a throb of the heart of the earth, every bound like a sigh of her bliss. Florimel shouted almost like a boy with ecstasy, and Clementina's moonlight went very near changing into sunlight as she gazed, and breathed, and knew that she was alive.

They started without Malcolm, for he must always put his mistress up, and then go back to the stable for Kelpie. In a moment they were in the wood, crossing its shadows. It was like swimming their horses through a sea of shadows. Then came a little stream, and the horses splashed it about like children from very gamesomeness. Half a mile more, and there was a sawmill, with a mossy wheel, a pond behind, dappled with sun and shade, a dark rush of water along a brown trough, and the air full of the sweet smell of sawn wood. Clementina had not once looked behind, and did not know whether Malcolm had yet joined them or not. All at once the wild vitality of Kelpie filled the space

beside her, and the voice of Malcolm was in her ears. She turned her head. He was looking very solemn.

"Will you let me tell you, my lady, what this always makes me think of?" he said.

"What in particular do you mean?" returned Clementina coldly.

"This smell of new-sawn wood that fills the air, my lady."

She bowed her head.

"It makes me think of Jesus in his father's workshop," said Malcolm "—how he must have smelled the same sweet scent of the trees of the world, broken for the uses of men, that is now so sweet to me. Oh, my lady! it makes the earth very holy and very lovely to think that as we are in the world, so was he in the world. Oh, my lady! think:—if God should be so nearly one with us that it was nothing strange to him thus to visit his people! that we are not the offspring of the soulless tyranny of law that knows not even its own self, but the children of an unfathomable wonder, of which science gathers only the foambells on the shore—children in the house of a living Father, so entirely

our Father that he cares even to death that we should understand and love him!"

He reined Kelpie back, and as she passed on, his eyes caught a glimmer of emotion in Clementina's. He fell behind, and all that day did not come near her again.

Florimel asked her what he had been saying, and she compelled herself to repeat a part of it.

"He is always saying such odd out-of-the-way things!" remarked Florimel. "I used sometimes, like you, to fancy him a little astray, but I soon found I was wrong. I wish you could have heard him tell a story he once told my father and me. It was one of the wildest you ever heard. I can't tell to this day whether he believed it himself or not. He told it quite as if he did."

"Could you not make him tell it again, as we ride along? It would shorten the way."

"Do you want the way shortened?—I don't. But indeed it would not do to tell it so. It ought to be heard just where I heard it—at the foot of the ruined castle where the dreadful things in it took place. You must come and see me at Lossie House in the autumn, and

then he shall tell it you. Besides, it ought to be told in Scotch, and there you will soon learn enough to follow it: half the charm depends on that."

Although Malcolm did not again approach Clementina that day, he watched almost her every motion as she rode. Her lithe, graceful back and shoulders—for she was a rebel against the fashion of the day in dress as well as in morals, and, believing in the natural stay of the muscles, had found them responsive to her trust—the noble poise of her head, and the motions of her arms, easy yet decided, were ever present to him, though sometimes he could hardly have told whether to his sight or his mind—now in the radiance of the sun, now in the shadow of the wood, now against the green of the meadow, now against the blue of the sky, and now in the faint moonlight, through which he followed, as a ghost in the realms of Hades might follow the ever flitting phantom of his love. Day glided after day. Adventure came not near them. Soft and lovely as a dream the morning dawned, the noon flowed past, the evening came—and the death that followed was yet sweeter than

the life that had gone before. Through it all, day-dream and nightly trance, radiant air and moony mist, before him glode the shape of Clementina, its every motion a charm. After that shape he could have been content, oh, how content! to ride on and on through the ever unfolding vistas of an eternal succession. Occasionally his mistress would call him to her, and then he would have one glance at the day-side of the wondrous world he had been following. Somewhere within it must be the word of the living One. Little he thought that all the time she was thinking more of him who had spoken that word in her hearing. That he was the object of her thoughts, not a suspicion crossed the mind of the simple youth. How could he imagine a lady like her taking a fancy to what, for all his marquisate, he still was in his own eyes, a raw young fisherman, only just learning how to behave himself decently! No doubt, ever since she began to listen to reason, the idea of her had been spreading like a sweet odour in his heart, but not because she had listened to *him*. The very fulness of his admiration had made him wrathful with the intellectual dishonesty, for in

her it could not be stupidity, that quenched his worship, and the first dawning sign of a *reasonable* soul drew him to her feet, where, like Pygmalion before his statue, he could have poured out his heart in thanks, that she consented to be a woman. But even the intellectual phantom, nay, even the very phrase of being in love with her, had never risen upon the dimmest verge of his consciousness—and that although her being had now become to him of all but absorbing interest. I say *all but*, because Malcolm knew something of One whose idea she was, who had uttered her from the immortal depths of his imagination. The man to whom no window into the treasures of the Godhead has yet been opened, may well scoff at the notion of such a love, for he has this advantage, that, while one like Malcolm can never cease to love, he, gifted being, can love to-day and forget to-morrow—or next year—where is the difference? Malcolm's main thought was—what a grand thing it would be to rouse a woman like Clementina to lift her head into the

> regions mild of calm and serene air,
> Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
> Which men call Earth.

If anyone think that love has no right to talk religion, I answer for Malcolm at least, asking, Whereof shall a man speak, if not out of the abundance of his heart? That man knows little either of love or of religion who imagines they ought to be kept apart. Of what sort, I ask, is either, if unfit to approach the other? Has God decreed, created a love that must separate from himself? Is Love then divided? Or shall not love to the heart created, lift up the heart to the Heart creating? Alas for the love that is not treasured in heaven! for the moth and the rust will devour it. Ah, these pitiful old moth-eaten loves!"

All the journey then Malcolm was thinking how to urge the beautiful lady into finding for herself whether she had a father in heaven or not. A pupil of Mr. Graham, he placed little value in argument that ran in any groove but that of persuasion, or any value in persuasion that had any end but action.

On the second day of the journey, he rode up to his mistress, and told her, taking care that Lady Clementina should hear, that Mr. Graham was now preaching in London, adding that for

his part he had never before heard anything fit to call preaching. Florimel did not show much interest, but asked where, and Malcolm fancied he could see Lady Clementina make a mental note of the place.

"If only," he thought, "she would let the power of that man's faith have a chance of influencing her, all would be well."

The ladies talked a good deal, but Florimel was not in earnest about anything, and for Clementina to have turned the conversation upon those possibilities, dim-dawning through the chaos of her world, which had begun to interest her, would have been absurd—especially since such was her confusion and uncertainty, that she could not tell whether they were clouds or mountains, shadows or continents. Besides, why give a child sovereigns to play with when counters or dominos would do as well? Clementina's thoughts could not have passed into Florimel, and become her thoughts. Their hearts, their natures must come nearer first. Advise Florimel to disregard rank, and marry the man she loved! As well counsel the child to give away the cake he would cry for with

intensified selfishness the moment he had parted with it! Still, there was that in her feeling for Malcolm which rendered her doubtful in Florimel's presence.

Between the grooms little passed. Griffith's contempt for Malcolm found its least offensive expression in silence, its most offensive in the shape of his countenance. He could not make him the simplest reply without a sneer. Malcolm was driven to keep mostly behind. If by any chance he got in front of his fellow-groom, Griffith would instantly cross his direction and ride between him and the ladies. His look seemed to say he had to protect them.

CHAPTER XVI.

PORTLAND PLACE.

THE latter part of the journey was not so pleasant: it rained. It was not cold, however, and the ladies did not mind it much. It accorded with Clementina's mood; and as to Florimel, but for the thought of meeting Caley, her fine spirits would have laughed the weather to scorn. Malcolm was merry. His spirits always rose at the appearance of bad weather, as indeed with every show of misfortune a response antagonistic invariably awoke in him. On the present occasion he had even to repress the constantly recurring impulse to break out in song. His bosom's lord sat lightly in his throne. Griffith was the only miserable one of the party. He was tired, and did not relish the thought of the work to be done before getting home. They

entered London in a wet fog, streaked with rain, and dyed with smoke. Florimel went with Clementina for the night, and Malcolm carried a note from her to Lady Bellair, after which, having made Kelpie comfortable, he went to his lodgings.

When he entered the curiosity-shop, the woman received him with evident surprise, and when he would have passed through to the stair, stopped him with the unwelcome information that, finding he did not return, and knowing nothing about himself or his occupation, she had, as soon as the week for which he had paid in advance was out, let the room to an old lady from the country."

"It is no great matter to me," said Malcolm, thoughtful over the woman's want of confidence in him, for he had rather liked her, "only I am sorry you could not trust me a little."

"It's all you know, young man," she returned. "People as lives in London must take care of theirselves—not wait for other people to do it. They'd soon find theirselves nowheres in partic'lar. I've took care on your things, an' laid 'em all together, an' the sooner you find

another place for 'em the better, for they do take up a deal o' room."

His personal property was not so bulky, however, but that in ten minutes he had it all in his carpet-bag and a paper parcel, carrying which he re-entered the shop.

"Would you oblige me by allowing these to lie here till I come for them?" he said.

The woman was silent for a moment.

"I'd rather see the last on 'em," she answered. "To tell the truth, I don't like the look on 'em. You acts a part, young man. I'm on the square myself. But you'll find plenty to take you in.—No, I can't do it. Take 'em with you."

Malcolm turned from her, and with his bag in one hand and the parcel under the other arm, stepped from the shop into the dreary night. There he stood in the drizzle. It was a by-street into which gas had not yet penetrated, and the oil lamps shone red and dull through the fog. He concluded to leave the things with Merton, while he went to find a lodging.

Merton was a decent sort of fellow—*not* in

his master's confidence, and Malcolm found him quite as sympathetic as the small occasion demanded.

"It ain't no sort o' night," he said, "to go lookin' for a bed. Let's go an' speak to my old woman : she's a oner at contrivin'."

He lived over the stable, and they had but to go up the stair. Mrs. Merton sat by the fire. A cradle with a baby was in front of it. On the other side sat Caley, in suppressed exultation, for here came what she had been waiting for —the first fruits of certain arrangements between her and Mrs. Catanach. She greeted Malcolm distantly, but neither disdainfully nor spitefully.

"I trust you've brought me back my lady, MacPhail," she said; then added, thawing into something like jocularity, "I shouldn't have looked to you to go running away with her."

"I left my lady at Lady Clementina Thornicroft's an hour ago," answered Malcolm.

"Oh, of course! Lady Clem's everything now."

"I believe my lady's not coming home till to-morrow," said Malcolm.

"All the better for us," returned Caley. "Her room ain't ready for her.—But I didn't know you lodged with Mrs. Merton, MacPhail," she said, with a look at the luggage he had placed on the floor.

"Lawks, miss!" cried the good woman, "wherever should we put him up, as has but the next room?"

"You'll have to find that out, mother," said Merton. "Sure you've got enough to shake down for him! With a truss of straw to help, you'll manage it somehow—eh, old lady?—I'll be bound!" And with that he told Malcolm's condition.

"Well, I suppose we must manage it somehow," answered his wife, "but I'm afraid we can't make him over-comfortable."

"I don't see but we *could* take him in at the house," said Caley, reflectively. "There is a small room empty in the garret, I know. It ain't much more than a closet, to be sure, but if he could put up with it for a night or two, just till he found a better, I would run across and see what they say."

Malcolm wondered at the change in her, but

could not hesitate. The least chance of getting settled in the house was a thing not to be thrown away. He thanked her heartily. She rose and went, and they sat and talked till her return. She had been delayed, she said, by the housekeeper: "the cross old patch" had objected to taking in anyone from the stables."

"I'm sure," she went on, "there ain't the ghost of a reason why you shouldn't have the room, except that it ain't good enough. Nobody else wants it, or is likely to. But it's all right now, and if you'll come across in about an hour, you'll find it ready for you. One of the girls in the kitchen—I forget her name—offered to make it tidy for you. Only take care—I give you warning: she's a great admirer of Mr. MacPhail."

Therewith she took her departure, and at the appointed time Malcolm followed her. The door was opened to him by one of the maids whom he knew by sight, and in her guidance he soon found himself in that part of a house he liked best—immediately under the roof. The room was indeed little more than a closet in the slope of the roof, with only a sky-light.

But just outside the door was a storm-window, from which, over the top of a lower range of houses, he had a glimpse of the mews-yard. The place smelt rather badly of mice, while, as the sky-light was immediately above his bed, and he had no fancy for drenching that with an infusion of soot, he could not open it. These, however, were the sole faults he had to find with the place. Everything looked nice and clean, and his education had not tended to fastidiousness. He took a book from his bag, and read a good while; then went to bed, and fell fast asleep.

In the morning he woke early, as was his habit, sprang at once on the floor, dressed, and went quietly down. The household was yet motionless. He had begun to descend the last stair, when all at once he turned deadly sick, and had to sit down, grasping the balusters. In a few minutes he recovered, and made the best speed he could to the stable, where Kelpie was now beginning to demand her breakfast.

But Malcolm had never in his life before felt sick, and it seemed awful to him. Something that had appeared his own, a portion—hardly a

portion, rather an essential element of himself, had suddenly deserted him, left him a prey to the inroad of something that was not of himself, bringing with it faintness of heart, fear and dismay. He found himself for the first time in his life trembling; and it was to him a thing as appalling as strange. While he sat on the stair he could not think; but as he walked to the mews he said to himself:

"Am I then the slave of something that is not myself—something to which my fancied freedom and strength are a mockery? Was my courage, my peace, all the time dependent on something not me, which could be separated from me, and but a moment ago was separated from me, and left me as helplessly dismayed as the veriest coward in creation? I wonder what Alexander would have thought if, as he swung himself on Bucephalus, he had been taken as I was on the stair."

Afterwards, talking the thing over with Mr. Graham, he said:

"I saw that I had no hand in my own courage. If I had any courage, it was simply that I was born with it. If it left me, I could

not help it: I could neither prevent nor recall it; I could only wait until it returned. Why, then, I asked myself, should I feel ashamed that, for five minutes, as I sat on the stair, Kelpie was a terror to me, and I felt as if I dared not go near her? I had almost reached the stable before I saw into it a little. Then I did see that if I had had nothing to do with my own courage, it was quite time I had something to do with it. If a man had no hand in his own nature, character, being, what could he be better than a divine puppet—a happy creature, possibly—a heavenly animal, like the grand horses and lions of the book of the Revelation—but not one of the gods that the sons of God, the partakers of the divine nature, are? For this end came the breach in my natural courage—that I might repair it from the will and power God had given me, that I might have a hand in the making of my own courage, in the creating of myself. Therefore I must see to it."

Nor had he to wait for his next lesson, namely, the opportunity of doing what he had been taught in the first. For just as he reached the

stable, where he heard Kelpie clamouring with hoofs and teeth, after her usual manner when she judged herself neglected, the sickness returned, and with it such a fear of the animal he heard thundering and clashing on the other side of the door, as amounted to nothing less than horror. She was a man-eating horse! —a creature with bloody teeth, brain-spattered hoofs, and eyes of hate! A flesh-loving devil had possessed her, and was now crying out for her groom that he might devour him.

He gathered, with agonized effort, every power within him to an awful council, and thus he said to himself:

"Better a thousand times my brains plastered the stable-wall than I should hold them in the head of a dastard. How can God look at me with any content if I quail in the face of his four-footed creature! Does he not demand of me action according to what I *know*, not what I may chance at any moment to *feel?* God is my strength, and I will lay hold of that strength and use it, or I have none, and Kelpie may take me and welcome."

Therewith the sickness abated so far that he

was able to open the stable-door; and, having brought them once into the presence of their terror, his will arose and lorded it over his shrinking quivering nerves, and like slaves they obeyed him. Surely the Father of his spirit was most in that will, when most that will was Malcolm's own! It is when a man is most a man, that the cause of the man, the God of his life, the very Life himself, the original life-creating Life, is closest to him, is most within him. The individual, that his individuality may blossom, and not soon be "massed into the common clay," must have the vital indwelling of the primary Individuality which is its origin. The fire that is the hidden life of the bush will not consume it.

Malcolm tottered to the corn-bin, staggered up to Kelpie, fell up against her hind quarters as they dropped from a great kick, but got into the stall beside her. She turned eagerly, darted at her food, swallowed it greedily, and was quiet as a lamb while he dressed her.

CHAPTER XVII.

PORTLOSSIE AND SCAURNOSE.

MEANTIME things were going rather badly at Portlossie and Scaurnose; and the factor was the devil of them. Those who had known him longest said he must be *fey*, that is *doomed*, so strangely altered was his behaviour. Others said he took more counsel with his bottle than had been his wont, and got no good from it. Almost all the fishers found him surly, and upon some he broke out in violent rage, while to certain whom he regarded as Malcolm's special friends, he carried himself with cruel oppression. The notice to leave at midsummer clouded the destiny of Joseph Mair and his family, and every householder in the two villages believed that to take them in would be to call down the like fate upon himself. Bnt Meg Partan at

least was not to be intimidated. Her outbursts of temper were but the hurricanes of a tropical heart—not much the less true and good and steadfast that it was fierce. Let the factor rage as he would, Meg was absolute in her determination that, if the cruel sentence were carried out, which she hardly expected, her house should be the shelter of those who had received her daughter when her severity had driven her from her home. That would leave her own family and theirs three months to look out for another abode. Certain of Blue Peter's friends ventured a visit of intercession to the factor, and were received with composure and treated with consideration until their object appeared, when his wrath burst forth so wildly that they were glad to escape without having to defend their persons: only the day before had he learned with certainty from Miss Horn that Malcolm was still in the service of the marchioness, and in constant attendance upon her when she rode. It almost maddened him. He had for some time taken to drinking more toddy after his dinner, and it was fast ruining his temper: his wife, who had from the first excited his indigna-

tion against Malcolm, was now reaping her reward. To complete the troubles of the fisher-folk, the harbour at Portlossie had, by a severe equinoctial storm, been so filled with sand as to be now inaccessible at lower than half tide, nobody as yet having made it his business to see it attended to.

But, in the midst of his anxieties about Florimel and his interest in Clementina, Malcolm had not been forgetting them. As soon as he was a little settled in London, he had written to Mr. Soutar, and he to architects and contractors, on the subject of a harbour at Scaurnose. But there were difficulties, and the matter had been making but slow progress. Malcolm, however, had insisted, and in consequence of his determination to have the possibilities of the thing thoroughly understood, three men appeared one morning on the rocks at the bottom of the cliff on the west side of the Nose. The children of the village discovered them, and carried the news; whereupon, the men being all out in the bay, the women left their work and went to see what the strangers were about. The moment they were satisfied that

they could make nothing of their proceedings, they naturally became suspicious. To whom the fancy first occurred, nobody ever knew, but such was the unhealthiness of the moral atmosphere of the place, caused by the injustice and severity of Mr. Crathie, that, once suggested, it was universally received that they were sent by the factor—and that for a purpose only too consistent with the treatment Scaurnose, they said, had invariably received ever since first it was the dwelling of fishers! Had not their fathers told them how unwelcome they were to the lords of the land? And what rents had they not to pay! and how poor was the shelter for which they paid so much—without a foot of land to grow a potato in! To crown all, the factor was at length about to drive them in a body from the place—Blue Peter first, one of the best as well as most considerable men amongst them! His notice to quit was but the beginning of a clearance. It was easy to see what those villains were about—on that precious rock, their only friend, the one that did its best to give them the sole shadow of harbourage they had, cutting off the wind from the

north-east a little, and breaking the eddy round the point of the Nose! What *could* they be about but marking the spots where to bore the holes for the blasting-powder that should scatter it to the winds, and let death and destruction and the wild sea howling in upon Scaurnose, that the cormorant and the bittern might possess it, the owl and the raven dwell in it? But it would be seen what their husbands and fathers would say to it when they came home! In the meantime they must themselves do what they could. What were they men's wives for, if not to act for their husbands when they happened to be away?

The result was a shower of stones upon the unsuspecting surveyors, who forthwith fled, and carried the report of their reception to Mr. Soutar at Duff Harbour. He wrote to Mr. Crathie, who till then had heard nothing of the business; and the news increased both his discontent with his superiors, and his wrath with those whom he had come to regard as his rebellious subjects. The stiff-necked people of the Bible was to him always now, as often as he heard the words, the people of Scaurnose

and the Seaton of Portlossie. And having at length committed this overt outrage, would he not be justified by all in taking more active measures against them?

When the fishermen came home and heard how their women had conducted themselves, they accepted their conjectures, and approved of their defence of the settlement. It was well for the land-loupers, they said, that they had only the women to deal with.

Blue Peter did not so soon hear of the affair as the rest, for his Annie had not been one of the assailants. But when the hurried retreat of the surveyors was described to him in somewhat graphic language by one of those concerned in causing it, he struck his clenched fist in the palm of his other hand, and cried,

"Weel saired! There! that's what comes o' yer new——"

He had all but broken his promise, as he had already broken his faith to Malcolm, when his wife laid her hand on his mouth, and stopped the issuing word. He started with sudden conviction, and stood for a moment in absolute terror at sight of the precipice down which he

had been on the point of falling, then straightway excusing himself to his conscience on the ground of non-intent, was instantly angrier with Malcolm than before. He could not reflect that the disregarded cause of the threatened sin was the greater sin of the two. The breach of that charity which thinketh no evil may be a graver fault than a hasty breach of promise.

Peter had not been improving since his return from London. He found less satisfaction in his *religious exercises;* was not unfrequently clouded in temper, occasionally even to sullenness; referred things oftener than formerly to the vileness of the human nature, but was far less willing than before to allow that he might himself be wrong; while somehow the Bible had no more the same plenitude of relation to the wants of his being, and he rose from the reading of it unrefreshed. Men asked each other what had come to Blue Peter, but no one could answer the question. For himself, he attributed the change, which he could not but recognize, although he did not understand it, to the withdrawing of the spirit of God, in displeasure that he had not merely allowed himself to be in-

veigled into a playhouse, but, far worse, had enjoyed the wickedness he saw there. When his wife reasoned that God knew he had gone in ignorance, trusting his friend, he cried,

"What 's that to him wha judges richteous judgment? What 's a' oor puir meeserable excuzes i' the een 'at can see throu' the wa's o' the hert! Ignorance is no innocence."

Thus he lied for God, pleading his cause on the principles of hell. But the eye of his wife was single, and her body full of light; therefore to her it was plain that neither the theatre nor his conscience concerning it was the cause of the change: it had to do with his feelings towards Malcolm. He wronged his friend in his heart, half knew it, but would not own it. Fearing to search himself, he took refuge in resentment, and to support his hard judgment, put false and cruel interpretations on whatever befell. So that, with love and anger and wrong unacknowledged, his heart was full of bitterness.

"It 's a' the drumblet *(muddied, troubled)* luve o' 'im!" said Annie to herself. "Puir fallow! gien only Ma'colm wad come hame, an' lat him

ken he 's no the villain he taks him for. I'll no believe mysel' 'at the laad I kissed like my ain mither's son afore he gaed awa' wad turn like that upo' 's 'maist the meenute he was oot o' sicht, an' a' for a feow words aboot a fulish play-actin'. Lord bliss us a'! markises is men!"

"We'll see, Peter, my man," she said, when the neighbour took her leave, "whether the wife, though she hasna been to the ill place, an' that's surely Lon'on, canna tell the true frae the fause full better nor her man, 'at kens sae muckle mair nor she wants to ken! Lat sit an' lat see."

Blue Peter made no reply; but perhaps the deepest depth in his fall was that he *feared* his wife might be right, and he have one day to stand ashamed before both her and his friend. But there are marvellous differences in the *quality* of the sins of different men, and a noble nature like Peter's would have to sink far indeed to be beyond a ready redemption. Still there was one element mingling with his wrongness whose very triviality increased the difficulty of long-delaying repentance: he had been not a little proud at finding himself the friend

of a marquis. From the first they had been friends, when the one was a youth and the other a child, and had been out together in many a stormy and dangerous sea. More than once or twice, driven from the churlish ocean to the scarce less inhospitable shore, they had lain all night in each other's arms to keep the life awake within their frozen garments. And now this marquis spoke English to him! It rankled.

All the time Blue Peter was careful to say nothing to injure Malcolm in the eyes of his former comrades. His manner when his name was mentioned, however, he could not honestly school to the conveyance of the impression that things were as they had been betwixt them. Folk marked the difference, and it went to swell the general feeling that Malcolm had done ill to forsake a sea-faring life for one upon which all fishermen must look down with contempt. Some in the Seaton went so far in their enmity as even to hint at an explanation of his conduct in the truth of the discarded scandal which had laid Lizzy's child at his door.

But amongst them was one who, having wronged him thus, and been convinced of her

error, was now so fiercely his partisan as to be ready to wrong the whole town in his defence: that was Meg Partan, properly Mistress Findlay, Lizzy's mother. Although the daughter had never confessed, the mother had yet arrived at the right conclusion concerning the father of her child—how, she could hardly herself have told, for the conviction had grown by accretion; a sign here and a sign there, impalpable save to maternal sense, had led her to the truth; and now, if anyone had a word to say against Malcolm, he had better not say it in the hearing of the Partaness.

One day Blue Peter was walking home from the upper town of Portlossie, not with the lazy gait of the fisherman off work, poised backwards with hands in trouser-pocket, but stooping care-laden with listless-swinging arms. Thus Meg Partan met him—and of course attributed his dejection to the factor.

"Deil ha'e 'im for an upsettin' rascal 'at hasna pride eneuch to haud him ohn lickit the gentry's shune! The man maun be fey! I houp he may, an' I wuss I saw the beerial o' 'im makin' for the kirkyaird. It's nae ill to

wuss weel to a' body 'at wad be left! His nose is turnt twise the colour i' the last twa month. He'll be drinkin' byous. Gien only Ma'colm MacPhail had been at hame to haud him in order!"

Peter said nothing, and his silence, to one who spoke out whatever came, seemed fuller of restraints and meanings than it was. She challenged it at once.

"Noo, what mean ye by sayin' naething, Peter? Guid kens it's the warst thing man or woman can say o' onybody to haud their tongue. It's a thing I never was blamed wi' mysel', an' I wadna du't."

"That's verra true," said Peter.

"The mair weicht's intill't whan I lay 't to the door o' anither," persisted Meg. "Peter, gien ye ha'e onything again' my freen' Ma'colm MacPhail, oot wi' 't like a man, an' no playac' the gunpoother-plot ower again. Ill wull's the warst poother ye can lay i' the boddom o' ony man's boat. But say 'at ye like, I s' uphaud Ma'colm again' the haill poustie o' ye. Gien he was but here! I say't again, honest laad!"

But she could not rouse Peter to utterance,

and losing what little temper she had, she rated him soundly, and sent him home saying with the prophet Jonah, "Do I not well to be angry?" for that also he placed to Malcolm's account. Nor was his home any more a harbour for his riven boat, seeing his wife only longed for the return of him with whom his spirit chode: she regarded him as an exiled king, one day to reappear, and justify himself in the eyes of all, friends and enemies.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TORTURE.

THOUGH unable to eat any breakfast, Malcolm persuaded himself that he felt nearly as well as usual when he went to receive his mistress's orders. Florimel had had enough of horseback—for several days to come indeed—and would not ride. So he saddled Kelpie, and rode to Chelsea to look after his boat. To get rid of the mare, he rang the stable-bell at Mr. Lenorme's, and the gardener let him in. As he was putting her up, the man told him that the housekeeper had heard from his master. Malcolm went to the house to learn what he might, and found to his surprise that, if he had gone on the continent, he was there no longer, for the letter, which contained only directions concerning some of his pictures, was dated from

Newcastle, and bore the Durham postmark of a week ago. Malcolm remembered that he had heard Lenorme speak of Durham cathedral, and in the hope that he might be spending some time there, begged the housekeeper to allow him to go to the study to write to her master. When he entered, however, he saw something that made him change his plan, and, having written, instead of sending the letter, as he had intended, inclosed to the postmaster at Durham, he left it upon an easel. It contained merely an earnest entreaty to be made and kept acquainted with his movements, that he might at once let him know if anything should occur that he ought to be informed concerning.

He found all on board the yacht in ship-shape, only Davy was absent. Travers explained that he sent him on shore for a few hours every day. He was a sharp boy, he said, and the more he saw, the more useful he would be, and as he never gave him any money, there was no risk of his mistaking his hours.

"When do you expect him?" asked Malcolm.

"At four o'clock," answered Travers.

"It is four now," said Malcolm.

A shrill whistle came from the Chelsea shore.

"And there's Davy," said Travers.

Malcolm got into the dinghy and rowed ashore.

"Davy," he said, "I don't want you to be all day on board, but I can't have you be longer away than an hour at a time."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Davy.

"Now attend to me."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Do you know Lady Lossie's house?"

"No, sir; but I ken hersel'."

"How is that?"

"I ha'e seen her mair nor twa or three times, ridin' wi' yersel', to yon hoose yon'er."

"Would you know her again?"

"Ay wad I—fine that. What for no, sir?"

"It's a good way to see a lady across the Thames and know her again."

"Ow! but I tuik the spy-glaiss till her," answered Davy, reddening.

"You are sure of her, then?"

"I *am* that, sir."

"Then come with me, and I will show you where she lives. I will not ride faster than you

can run. But mind you don't look as if you belonged to me."

"Na, na, sir. There's fowk takin' nottice."

"What do you mean by that?"

"There's a wee laddie been efter mysel' twise or thrice."

"Did you do anything?"

"He wasna big eneuch to lick, sae I jist got him the last time an' pu'd his niz, an' I dinna think he'll come efter me again."

To see what the boy could do, Malcolm let Kelpie go at a good trot: but Davy kept up without effort, now shooting ahead, now falling behind, now stopping to look in at a window, and now to cast a glance at a game of pitch and toss. No mere passer-by could have suspected that the sailor-boy belonged to the horseman. He dropped him not far from Portland Place, telling him to go and look at the number, but not stare at the house.

All the time he had had no return of the sickness, but, although thus actively occupied, had felt greatly depressed. One main cause of this was, however, that he had not found his religion stand him in such stead as he might have hoped.

It was not yet what it must be to prove its reality. And now his eyes were afresh opened to see that in his nature and thoughts lay large spaces wherein God ruled not supreme—desert places, where who could tell what might appear? For in such regions wild beasts range, evil herbs flourish, and demons go about. If in very deed he lived and moved and had his being in God, then assuredly there ought not to be one cranny in his nature, one realm of his consciousness, one well-spring of thought, where the will of God was a stranger. If all were as it should be, then surely there would be no moment, looking back on which he could not at least say,

> Yet like some sweet beguiling melody,
> So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
> Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
> Yea, with my life and life's own secret joy.

"In that agony o' sickness, as I sat upo' the stair," he said to himself, for still in his own thoughts he spoke his native tongue, "whaur was my God in a' my thouchts? I did cry till 'im, I min' weel, but it was my reelin' brain an' no my trustin' hert 'at cried. Aih me! I doobt gien the Lord war to come to me noo, he wadna

fin' muckle faith i' my pairt o' the yerth. Aih! I wad like to lat him see something like lippenin'! I wad fain trust him till his hert's content. But I doobt it's only speeritual ambeetion, or better wad hae come o' 't by this time. Gien that sickness come again, I maun see, noo 'at I'm forewarned o' my ain wakeness, what I can du. It maun be something better nor last time, or I'll tine hert a'thegither. Weel, maybe I need to be heumblet. The Lord help me!"

In the evening he went to the schoolmaster, and gave him a pretty full account of where he had been and what had taken place since last he saw him, dwelling chiefly on his endeavours with Lady Clementina.

From Mr. Graham's lodging to the north-eastern gate of the Regent's Park, the nearest way led through a certain passage, which, although a thoroughfare to persons on foot, was little known. Malcolm had early discovered it, and always used it. Part of this short cut was the yard and back-premises of a small public-house. It was between eleven and twelve as he entered it for the second time that night. Sunk in thought and suspecting no evil,

he was struck down from behind, and lost his consciousness. When he came to himself he was lying in the public-house, with his head bound up, and a doctor standing over him, who asked him if he had been robbed. He searched his pockets, and found that his old watch was gone, but his money left. One of the men standing about said he would see him home. He half thought he had seen him before, and did not like the look of him, but accepted the offer, hoping to get on the track of something thereby. As soon as they entered the comparative solitude of the park he begged his companion, who had scarcely spoken all the way, to give him his arm, and leaned upon it as if still suffering, but watched him closely. About the middle of the park, where not a creature was in sight, he felt him begin to fumble in his coat-pocket, and draw something from it. But when, unresisted, he snatched away his other arm, Malcolm's fist followed it, and the man fell, nor made any resistance while he took from him a short stick, loaded with lead, and his own watch, which he found in his waistcoat-pocket. Then the fellow rose with

apparent difficulty, but the moment he was on his legs, ran like a hare, and Malcolm let him run, for he felt unable to follow him.

As soon as he reached home, he went to bed, for his head ached severely; but he slept pretty well, and in the morning flattered himself he felt much as usual. But it was as if all the night that horrible sickness had been lying in wait on the stair to spring upon him: for, the moment he reached the same spot on his way down, he almost fainted. It was worse than before. His very soul seemed to turn sick. But although his heart died within him, somehow, in the confusion of thought and feeling occasioned by intense suffering, it seemed while he clung to the balusters as if with both hands he were clinging to the skirts of God's garment; and through the black smoke of his fainting, his soul seemed to be struggling up towards the light of his being. Presently the horrible sense subsided as before, and again he sought to descend the stair and go to Kelpie. But immediately the sickness returned, and all he could do after a long and vain struggle, was to crawl on hands and knees

up the stairs and back to his room. There he crept upon his bed, and was feebly committing Kelpie to the care of her maker, when consciousness forsook him.

It returned, heralded by frightful pains all over his body, which by and by subsiding, he sank again to the bottom of the black Lethe.

Meantime Kelpie had got so wildly uproarious that Merton tossed her half a truss of hay, which she attacked like an enemy, and ran to the house to get somebody to call Malcolm. After what seemed endless delay, the door was opened by his admirer, the scullery-maid, who, as soon as she heard what was the matter, hastened to his room.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PHILTRE.

BEFORE he came again to himself, Malcolm had a dream, which, although very confused, was in parts more vivid than any he had ever had. His surroundings in it were those in which he actually lay, and he was ill, but he thought it the one illness he had before. His head ached, and he could rest in no position he tried. Suddenly he heard a step he knew better than any other approaching the door of his chamber: it opened, and his grandfather in great agitation entered, not following his hands, however, in the fashion usual to blindness, but carrying himself like any sight-gifted man. He went straight to the wash-stand, took up the water-bottle, and with a look of mingled wrath and horror, dashed it

on the floor. The same instant a cold shiver ran through the dreamer, and his dream vanished. But instead of waking in his bed, he found himself standing in the middle of the floor, his feet wet, the bottle in shivers about them, and, strangest of all, the neck of the bottle in his hand. He lay down again, grew delirious, and tossed about in the remorseless persecution of centuries. But at length his tormentors left him, and when he came to himself, he knew he was in his right mind.

It was evening, and some one was sitting near his bed. By the light of the long-snuffed tallow candle, he saw the glitter of two great black eyes watching him, and recognized the young woman who had admitted him to the house the night of his return, and whom he had since met once or twice as he came and went. The moment she perceived that he was aware of her presence, she threw herself on her knees at his bedside, hid her face, and began to weep. The sympathy of his nature rendered yet more sensitive by weakness and suffering, Malcolm laid his hand on her head, and sought to comfort her.

"Don't be alarmed about me," he said; "I shall soon be all right again."

"I can't bear it," she sobbed. "I can't bear to see you like that, and all my fault."

"*Your* fault! What *can* you mean?" said Malcolm.

"But I did go for the doctor, for all it may be the hanging of me," she sobbed. "Miss Caley said I wasn't to, but I would and I did. They can't say I meant it—can they?"

"I don't understand," said Malcolm, feebly.

"The doctor says somebody's been an' p'isoned you," said the girl, with a cry that sounded like a mingled sob and howl; "an' he's been a-pokin' of all sorts of things down your poor throat."

And again she cried aloud in her agony.

"Well, never mind; I'm not dead you see; and I'll take better care of myself after this. Thank you for being so good to me; you've saved my life."

"Ah! you won't be so kind to me when you know all, Mr. MacPhail," sobbed the girl. "It was myself gave you the horrid stuff, but God

knows I didn't mean to do you no harm no more than your own mother."

"What made you do it then?" asked Malcolm.

"The witch-woman told me to. She said that—that—if I gave it you—you would—you would——"

She buried her face in the bed, and so stifled a fresh howl of pain and shame.

"And it was all lies—lies!" she resumed, lifting her face again, which now flashed with rage, "for I know you'll hate me worse than ever now."

"My poor girl, I never hated you," said Malcolm.

"No, but you did as bad: you never looked at me. And now you'll hate me out and out. And the doctor says if you die, he'll have it all searched into, and Miss Caley she look at me as if she suspect me of a hand in it; and they won't let alone till they've got me hanged for it; and it's all along of love of you; and I tell you the truth, Mr. MacPhail, and you can do anything with me you like—I don't care—only

you won't let them hang me—will you?—Oh, please don't."

She said all this with clasped hands, and the tears streaming down her face.

Malcolm's impulse was of course to draw her to him and comfort her, but something warned him.

"Well, you see I'm not going to die just yet," he said as merrily as he could; "and if I find myself going, I shall take care the blame falls on the right person. What was the witch-woman like? Sit down on the chair there, and tell me all about her."

She obeyed with a sigh, and gave him such a description as he could not mistake. He asked where she lived, but the girl had never met her anywhere but in the street, she said.

Questioning her very carefully as to Caley's behaviour to her, Malcolm was convinced that she had a hand in the affair. Indeed, she had happily more to do with it than even Mrs. Catanach knew, for she had traversed her treatment to the advantage of Malcolm. The midwife had meant the potion to work slowly, but the lady's-maid had added to the pretended

philtre a certain ingredient in whose efficacy she had reason to trust; and the combination, while it wrought more rapidly, had yet apparently set up a counteraction favourable to the efforts of the struggling vitality which it stung to an agonised resistance.

But Malcolm's strength was now exhausted. He turned faint, and the girl had the sense to run to the kitchen and get him some soup. As he took it, her demeanour and regards made him anxious, uncomfortable, embarrassed. It is to any true man a hateful thing to repel a woman—it is such a reflection upon her.

"I've told you everything, Mr. MacPhail, and it's gospel truth I've told you," said the girl, after a long pause.—It was a relief when first she spoke, but the comfort vanished as she went on, and with slow, perhaps unconscious movements approached him.—"I would have died for you, and here that devil of a woman has been making me kill you! Oh, how I hate her! Now you will never love me a bit—not one tiny little bit for ever and ever!"

There was a tone of despairful entreaty in her words that touched Malcolm deeply.

"I am more indebted to you than I can speak or you imagine," he said. "You have saved me from my worst enemy. Do not tell any other what you have told me, or let anyone know that we have talked together. The day will come when I shall be able to show you my gratitude."

Something in his tone struck her, even through the folds of her passion. She looked at him a little amazed, and for a moment the tide ebbed. Then came a rush that overmastered her. She flung her hands above her head, and cried,

"That means you will do anything but love me!"

"I cannot love you as you mean," said Malcolm. "I promise to be your friend, but more is out of my power."

A fierce light came into the girl's eyes. But that instant a terrible cry, such as Malcolm had never heard, but which he knew must be Kelpie's, rang through the air, followed by the shouts of men, the tones of fierce execration, and the clash and clang of hoofs.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, and forgetting

everything else, sprang from the bed, and ran to the window outside his door.

The light of their lanterns dimly showed a confused crowd in the yard of the mews, and amidst the hellish uproar of their coarse voices he could hear Kelpie plunging and kicking. Again she uttered the same ringing scream. He threw the window open and cried to her that he was coming, but the noise was far too great for his enfeebled voice. Hurriedly he added a garment or two to his half-dress, rushed to the stair, passing his new friend, who watched anxiously at the head of it, without seeing her, and shot from the house.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEMONESS AT BAY.

WHEN he reached the yard of the mews, the uproar had nothing abated. But when he cried out to Kelpie, through it all came a whinny of appeal, instantly followed by a scream. When he got up to the lanterns, he found a group of wrathful men with stable-forks surrounding the poor animal, from whom the blood was streaming before and behind. Fierce as she was, she dared not move, but stood trembling, with the sweat of terror pouring from her. Yet her eye showed that not even terror had cowed her. She was but biding her time. Her master's first impulse was to scatter the men right and left, but on second thoughts, of which he was even then capable, he saw that they might have been driven to apparent

brutality in defence of their lives, and besides he could not tell what Kelpie might do if suddenly released. So he caught her by the broken halter, and told them to fall back. They did so carefully—it seemed unwillingly. But the mare had eyes and ears only for her master. What she had never done before, she nosed him over face and shoulders, trembling all the time. Suddenly one of her tormentors darted forward, and gave her a terrible prod in the off hind quarter. But he paid dearly for it. Ere he could draw back, she lashed out, and shot him half across the yard with his knee-joint broken. The whole set of them rushed at her.

"Leave her alone," shouted Malcolm, "or I will take her part. Between us we'll do for a dozen of you."

"The devil's in her," said one of them.

"You'll find more of him in that rascal groaning yonder. You had better see to him. He'll never do such a thing again, I fancy. Where is Merton?"

They drew off and went to help their comrade, who lay senseless.

When Malcolm would have led Kelpie in, she stopped suddenly at the stable-door, and started back shuddering, as if the memory of what she had endured there overcame her. Every fibre of her trembled. He saw that she must have been pitifully used before she broke loose and got out. But she yielded to his coaxing, and he led her to her stall without difficulty. He wished Lady Clementina herself could have been his witness how she knew her friend and trusted him. Had she seen how the poor bleeding thing rejoiced over him, she could not have doubted that his treatment had been in part at least a success.

Kelpie had many enemies amongst the men of the mews. Merton had gone out for the evening, and they had taken the opportunity of getting into her stable and tormenting her. At length she broke her fastenings; they fled, and she rushed out after them.

They carried the maimed man to the hospital, where his leg was immediately amputated.

Malcolm washed and dried his poor animal, handling her as gently as possible, for she was in a sad plight. It was plain he must not have

her here any longer: worse to her at least was sure to follow. He went up, trembling himself now, to Mrs. Merton. She told him she was just running to fetch him when he arrived: she had no idea how ill he was. But he felt all the better for the excitement, and after he had taken a cup of strong tea, wrote to Mr. Soutar to provide men on whom he could depend, if possible the same who had taken her there before, to await Kelpie's arrival at Aberdeen. There he must also find suitable housing and attention for her at any expense until further directions, or until, more probably, he should claim her himself. He added many instructions to be given as to her treatment.

Until Merton returned he kept watch, then went back to the chamber of his torture, which, like Kelpie, he shuddered to enter. The cook let him in, and gave him his candle, but hardly had he closed his door when a tap came to it, and there stood Rose, his preserver. He could not help feeling embarrassed when he saw her.

"I see you don't trust me," she said.

"I do trust you," he answered. "Will you

bring me some water. I dare not drink anything that has been standing."

She looked at him with inquiring eyes, nodded her head, and went. When she returned, he drank the water.

"There! you see I trust you," he said with a laugh. "But there are people about who for certain reasons want to get rid of me: will you be on my side?"

"That I will," she answered eagerly.

"I have not got my plans laid yet; but will you meet me somewhere near this to-morrow night? I shall not be at home, perhaps, all day."

She stared at him with great eyes, but agreed at once, and they appointed time and place. He then bade her good night, and the moment she left him lay down on the bed to think. But he did not trouble himself yet to unravel the plot against him, or determine whether the violence he had suffered had the same origin with the poisoning. Nor was the question merely how to continue to serve his sister without danger to his life; for he had just learned

what rendered it absolutely imperative that she should be removed from her present position. Mrs. Merton had told him that Lady Lossie was about to accompany Lady Bellair and Lord Liftore to the continent. That must not be, whatever means might be necessary to prevent it. Before he went to sleep things had cleared themselves up considerably.

He woke much better, and rose at his usual hour. Kelpie rejoiced him by affording little other sign of the cruelty she had suffered than the angry twitching of her skin when hand or brush approached a wound. The worst fear was that some few white hairs might by and by in consequence fleck her spotless black. Having urgently committed her to Merton's care, he mounted Honour, and rode to the Aberdeen wharf. There to his relief, time growing precious, he learned that the same smack in which Kelpie had come was to sail the next morning for Aberdeen. He arranged at once for her passage, and, before he left, saw to every contrivance he could think of for her safety and comfort. He warned the crew concerning her temper, but at the same time pre-

judiced them in her favour by the argument of a few sovereigns. He then rode to the Chelsea Reach, where the Psyche had now grown to be a feature of the river in the eyes of the dwellers upon its banks.

At his whistle, Davy tumbled into the dinghy like a round ball over the gunwale, and was rowing for the shore ere his whistle had ceased ringing in Malcolm's own ears. He left him with his horse, went on board, and gave various directions to Travers; then took Davy with him, and bought many things at different shops, which he ordered to be delivered to Davy when he should call for them. Having next instructed him to get everything on board as soon as possible, and appointed to meet him at the same place and hour he had arranged with Rose, he went home.

A little anxious lest Florimel might have wanted him, for it was now past the hour at which he usually waited her orders, he learned to his relief that she was gone shopping with Lady Bellair, upon which he set out for the hospital whither they had carried the man Kelpie had so terribly mauled. He went, not

merely led by sympathy, but urged by a suspicion also which he desired to verify or remove. On the plea of identification, he was permitted to look at him for a moment, but not to speak to him. It was enough: he recognized him at once as the same whose second attack he had foiled in the Regent's Park. He remembered having seen him about the stable, but had never spoken to him. Giving the nurse a sovereign, and Mr. Soutar's address, he requested her to let that gentleman know as soon as it was possible to conjecture the time of his leaving. Returning, he gave Merton a hint to keep his eye on the man, and some money to spend for him as he judged best. He then took Kelpie for an airing. To his surprise she fatigued him so much that when he had put her up again he was glad to go and lie down.

When it came near the time for meeting Rose and Davy, he got his things together in the old carpet-bag, which held all he cared for, and carried it with him. As he drew near the spot, he saw Davy already there, keeping a sharp look out on all sides. Presently Rose appeared,

but drew back when she saw Davy. Malcolm went to her.

"Rose," he said, "I am going to ask you to do me a great favour. But you cannot except you are able to trust me."

"I do trust you," she answered.

"All I can tell you now is that you must go with that boy to-morrow. Before night you shall know more. Will you do it?"

"I will," answered Rose. "I dearly love a secret."

"I promise to let you understand it, if you do just as I tell you."

"I will."

"Be at this very spot then to-morrow morning, at six o'clock. Come here, Davy. This boy will take you where I shall tell him."

She looked from the one to the other.

"I'll risk it," she said.

"Put on a clean frock, and take a change of linen with you and your dressing things. No harm shall come to you."

"I'm not afraid," she answered, but looked as if she would cry.

"Of course you will not tell anyone."

"I will not, Mr. MacPhail."

"You are trusting me a great deal, Rose; but I am trusting you too—more than you think.—Be off with that bag, Davy, and be here at six to-morrow morning, to carry this young woman's for her."

Davy vanished.

"Now, Rose," continued Malcolm, "you had better go and make your preparations."

"Is that all, sir?" she said.

"Yes. I shall see you to-morrow. Be brave."

Something in Malcolm's tone and manner seemed to work strangely on the girl. She gazed up at him half frightened, but submissive, and went at once, looking, however, sadly disappointed.

Malcolm had intended to go and tell Mr. Graham of his plans that same night, but he found himself too much exhausted to walk to Camden Town. And thinking over it, he saw that it might be as well if he took the bold measure he contemplated without revealing it to his friend, to whom the knowledge might be

the cause of inconvenience. He therefore went home and to bed, that he might be strong for the next day.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PSYCHE.

HE rose early the next morning, and having fed and dressed Kelpie, strapped her blanket behind her saddle, and, by all the macadamized ways he could find, rode her to the wharf—near where the Thames-tunnel had just been commenced. He had no great difficulty with her on the way, though it was rather nervous work at times. But of late her submission to her master had been decidedly growing. When he reached the wharf, he rode her straight along the gangway on to the deck of the smack, as the easiest if not perhaps the safest way of getting her on board. As soon as she was properly secured, and he had satisfied himself as to the provision they had made for her, impressed upon the captain the necessity of being bounti-

ful to her, and brought a loaf of sugar on board for her use, he left her with a lighter heart than he had had ever since first he fetched her from the same deck.

It was a long way to walk home, but he felt much better, and thought nothing of it. And all the way, to his delight, the wind met him in the face. A steady westerly breeze was blowing. If God makes his angels winds, as the Psalmist says, here was one sent to wait upon him. He reached Portland Place in time to present himself for orders at the usual hour. On these occasions, his mistress not unfrequently saw him herself, but to make sure, he sent up the request that she would speak with him.

"I am sorry to hear that you have been ill, Malcolm," she said kindly, as he entered the room, where happily he found her alone.

"I am quite well now, thank you, my lady," he returned. "I thought your ladyship would like to hear something I happened to come to the knowledge of the other day."

"Yes? What was that?"

"I called at Mr. Lenorme's to learn what news there might be of him. The housekeeper

let me go up to his painting-room; and what should I see there, my lady, but the portrait of my lord marquis more beautiful than ever, the brown smear all gone, and the likeness, to my mind, greater than before!"

"Then Mr. Lenorme is come home!" cried Florimel, scarce attempting to conceal the pleasure his report gave her.

"That I cannot say," said Malcolm. "His housekeeper had a letter from him a few days ago from Newcastle. If he is come back, I do not think she knows it. It seems strange, for who would touch one of his pictures but himself?—except, indeed, he got some friend to set it to rights for your ladyship. Anyhow, I thought you would like to see it again."

"I will go at once," Florimel said, rising hastily. "Get the horses, Malcolm, as fast as you can."

"If my Lord Liftore should come before we start?" he suggested.

"Make haste," returned his mistress, impatiently.

Malcolm did make haste, and so did Florimel. What precisely was in her thoughts who shall

say, when she could not have told herself? But doubtless the chance of seeing Lenorme urged her more than the desire to see her father's portrait. Within twenty minutes they were riding down Grosvenor Place, and happily heard no following hoof-beats. When they came near the river, Malcolm rode up to her and said,

"Would your ladyship allow me to put up the horses in Mr. Lenorme's stable? I think I could show your ladyship a point or two that may have escaped you."

Florimel thought for a moment, and concluded it would be less awkward, would indeed tend rather to her advantage with Lenorme, should he really be there, to have Malcolm with her.

"Very well," she answered. "I see no objection. I will ride round with you to the stable, and we can go in the back way."

They did so. The gardener took the horses, and they went up to the study. Lenorme was not there, and everything was just as when Malcolm was last in the room. Florimel was much disappointed, but Malcolm talked to her about the portrait, and did all he could to bring back vivid the memory of her father. At length

with a little sigh she made a movement to go.

"Has your ladyship ever seen the river from the next room?" said Malcolm, and, as he spoke, threw open the door of communication, near which they stood.

Florimel, who was always ready to *see*, walked straight into the drawing-room, and went to a window.

"There is that yacht lying there still!" remarked Malcolm. "Does she not remind you of the Psyche, my lady?"

"Every boat does that," answered his mistress. "I dream about her. But I couldn't tell her from many another."

"People used to boats, my lady, learn to know them like the faces of their friends.—What a day for a sail!"

"Do you suppose that one is for hire?" said Florimel.

"We can ask," replied Malcolm; and with that went to another window, raised the sash, put his head out, and whistled. Over tumbled Davy into the dinghy at the Psyche's stern, unloosed the painter, and was rowing for the shore ere the minute was out.

"Why, they're answering your whistle already!" said Florimel.

"A whistle goes farther, and perhaps is more imperative than any other call," returned Malcolm evasively. "Will your ladyship come down and hear what they say?"

A wave from the slow-silting lagoon of her girlhood came washing over the sands between, and Florimel flew merrily down the stair and across hall and garden and road to the river-bank, where was a little wooden stage or landing place, with a few steps, at which the dinghy was just arriving.

"Will you take us on board and show us your boat?" said Malcolm.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Davy.

Without a moment's hesitation, Florimel took Malcolm's offered hand, and stepped into the boat. Malcolm took the oars, and shot the little tub across the river. When they got alongside the cutter, Travers reached down both his hands for hers, Malcolm held one of his for her foot, and Florimel sprang on deck.

"Young woman on board, Davy?" whispered Malcolm.

"Ay, ay, sir—doon i' the fore," answered Davy, and Malcolm stood by his mistress.

"She *is* like the Psyche," said Florimel, turning to him, "only the mast is not so tall."

"Her topmast is struck, you see, my lady—to make sure of her passing clear under the bridges."

"Ask them if we couldn't go down the river a little way," said Florimel. "I should so like to see the houses from it!"

Malcolm conferred a moment with Travers and returned.

"They are quite willing, my lady," he said.

"What fun!" cried Florimel, her girlish spirit all at the surface. "How I should like to run away from horrid London altogether, and never hear of it again!—Dear old Lossie House! and the boats! and the fishermen!" she added, meditatively.

The anchor was already up, and the yacht drifting with the falling tide. A moment more and she spread a low treble-reefed mainsail behind, and a little jib before, and the western breeze filled and swelled and made them alive, and with wind and tide she went swiftly down

the smooth stream. Florimel clapped her hands with delight. The shores and all their houses fled up the river. They slid past row-boats, and great heavy barges loaded to the lip, with huge red sails and yellow, glowing and gleaming in the hot sun. For one moment the shadow of Vauxhall Bridge gloomed like a death-cloud, chill and cavernous, over their heads; then out again they shot into the lovely light and heat of the summer world.

"It's well we ain't got to shoot Putney or Battersea," said Travers with a grim smile, as he stood shaping her course by inches with his magic-like steering, in the midst of a little covey of pleasure-boats; "with this wind we might ha' brought either on 'em about our ears like an old barn."

"This *is* life!" cried Florimel, as the river bore them nearer and nearer to the vortex—deeper and deeper into the tumult of London. How solemn the silent yet never resting highway!—almost majestic in the stillness of its hurrying might as it rolled heedless past houses and wharfs that crowded its brinks. They darted through under Westminster Bridge, and

boats and barges, more and more numerous, covered the stream. Waterloo Bridge, Blackfriars' Bridge they passed. Sunlight all, and flashing water, and gleaming oars, and gay boats, and endless motion! out of which rose calm, solemn, reposeful, the resting yet hovering dome of Paul's, with its satellite spires, glittering in the tremulous hot air that swathed in multitudinous ripples the mighty city. Southwark Bridge—and only London Bridge lay between them and the open river, still widening as it flowed to the aged ocean. Through the centre arch they shot, and lo! a world of masts, waiting to woo with white sails the winds that should bear them across deserts of water to lands of wealth and mystery. Through the labyrinth led the highway of the stream, and downward they still swept—past the Tower, and past the wharf where that morning Malcolm had said good-bye for a time to his four-footed subject and friend. The smack's place was empty. With her hugest of sails, she was tearing and flashing away, out of their sight, far down the river before them. Through dingy dreary Limehouse they sank, and coasted

the melancholy, houseless Isle of Dogs; but on all sides were ships and ships, and when they thinned at last, Greenwich rose before them. London and the parks looked unendurable from this more varied life, more plentiful air, and above all more abundant space. The very spirit of freedom seemed to wave his wings about the yacht, fanning full her sails. Florimel breathed as if she never could have enough of the sweet wind: each breath gave her all the boundless region whence it blew; she gazed as if she would fill her soul with the sparkling gray of the water, the sun-melted blue of the sky, and the incredible green of the flat shores. For minutes she would be silent, her parted lips revealing her absorbed delight, then break out in a volley of questions, now addressing Malcolm, now Travers. She tried Davy too, but Davy knew nothing except his duty here. The Thames was like an unknown eternity to the creature of the Wan Water—about which, however, he could have told her a thousand things. Down and down the river they flew, and not until miles and miles of meadows had come between her and London, not indeed until Graves-

end appeared, did it occur to Florimel that perhaps it might be well to think by-and-by of returning. But she trusted everything to Malcolm, who of course would see that everything was as it ought to be.

Her excitement began to flag a little. She was getting tired. The bottle had been strained by the ferment of the wine. She turned to Malcolm.

"Had we not better be putting about?" she said. "I should like to go on for ever—but we must come another day, better provided. We shall hardly be in time for lunch."

It was nearly four o'clock, but she rarely looked at her watch, and indeed wound it up only now and then.

"Will you go below and have some lunch, my lady?" said Malcolm.

"There can't be anything on board!" she answered.

"Come and see, my lady," rejoined Malcolm, and led the way to the companion.

When she saw the little cabin, she gave a cry of delight.

"Why, it is just like our own cabin in the

Psyche," she said, "only smaller! Is it not, Malcolm?"

"It is smaller, my lady," returned Malcolm, "but then there is a little state-room beyond."

On the table was a nice meal—cold, but not the less agreeable in the summer weather. Everything looked charming. There were flowers; the linen was snowy; and the bread was the very sort Florimel liked best.

"It is a perfect fairy-tale!" she cried. "And I declare here is our crest on the forks and spoons!—What does it all mean, Malcolm?"

But Malcolm had slipped away, and gone on deck again, leaving her to food and conjecture, while he brought Rose up from the fore-cabin for a little air. Finding her fast asleep, however, he left her undisturbed.

Forimel finished her meal, and set about examining the cabin more closely. The result was bewilderment. How could a yacht, fitted with such completeness, such luxury, be lying for hire in the Thames? As for the crest on the plate, that was a curious coincidence: many people had the same crest. But both materials and colours were like those of the Psyche!

Then the pretty bindings on the book-shelves attracted her: every book was either one she knew or one of which Malcolm had spoken to her! He must have had a hand in the business! Next she opened the door of the state-room; but when she saw the lovely little white berth, and the indications of every comfort belonging to a lady's chamber, she could keep her pleasure to herself no longer. She hastened to the companion-way, and called Malcolm.

"What *does* it all mean?" she said, her eyes and cheeks glowing with delight.

"It means, my lady, that you are on board your own yacht, the Psyche. I brought her with me from Portlossie, and have had her fitted up according to the wish you once expressed to my lord, your father, that you could sleep on board. Now you might make a voyage of many days in her."

"Oh, Malcolm!" was all Florimel could answer. She was too pleased to think as yet of any of the thousand questions that might naturally have followed.

"Why, you've got the Arabian Nights, and

all my favourite books there!" she said at length. —"How long shall we have before we get among the ships again?"

She fancied she had given orders to return, and that the boat had been put about.

"A good many hours, my lady," answered Malcolm.

"Ah, of course!" she returned; "it takes much longer against wind and tide.—But my time is my own," she added, rather in the manner of one asserting a freedom she did not feel, "and I don't see why I should trouble myself. It will make some to-do, I daresay, if I don't appear at dinner; but it won't do anybody any harm. They wouldn't break their hearts if they never saw me again."

"Not one of them, my lady," said Malcolm.

She lifted her head sharply, but took no farther notice of his remark.

"I won't be plagued any more," she said, holding counsel with herself, but intending Malcolm to hear. "I will break with them rather. Why should I not be as free as Clementina? She comes and goes when and where she likes, and does what she pleases."

"Why, indeed?" said Malcolm; and a pause followed, during which Florimel stood apparently thinking, but in reality growing sleepy.

"I will lie down a little," she said, "with one of those lovely books."

The excitement, the air, and the pleasure generally had wearied her. Nothing could have suited Malcolm better. He left her. She went to her berth, and fell fast asleep.

When she woke, it was some time before she could think where she was. A strange ghosty light was about her, in which she could see nothing plain; but the motion helped her to understand. She rose, and crept to the companion ladder, and up on deck. Wonder upon wonder! A clear full moon reigned high in the heavens, and below there was nothing but water, gleaming with her molten face, or rushing past the boat lead-coloured, gray, and white. Here and there a vessel—a snow-cloud of sails—would glide between them and the moon, and turn black from truck to water-line. The mast of the Psyche had shot up to its full height; the reef-points of the mainsail were loose, and the gaff was crowned with its top-

sail; foresail and jib were full; and she was flying as if her soul thirsted within her after infinite spaces. Yet what more could she want? All around her was wave rushing upon wave, and above her blue heaven and regnant moon. Florimel gave a great sigh of delight.

But what did it—what could it mean? What was Malcolm about? Where was he taking her? What would London say to such an escapade extraordinary? Lady Bellair would be the first to believe she had run away with her groom—she knew so many instances of that sort of thing! and Lord Liftore would be the next. It was too bad of Malcolm! But she did not feel very angry with him, notwithstanding, for had he not done it to give her pleasure? And assuredly he had not failed. He knew better than anyone how to please her—better even than Lenorme!

She looked around her. No one was to be seen but Davy, who was steering. The mainsail hid the men, and Rose, having been on deck for two or three hours, was again below. She turned to Davy. But the boy had been schooled, and only answered,

"I maunna say naething sae lang's I'm steerin', mem."

She called Malcolm. He was beside her ere his name had left her lips. The boy's reply had irritated her, and, coming upon this sudden and utter change in her circumstances, made her feel as one no longer lady of herself and her people, but a prisoner.

"Once more, what does this mean, Malcolm?" she said, in high displeasure. "You have deceived me shamefully! You left me to believe we were on our way back to London—and here we are out at sea! Am I no longer your mistress? Am I a child, to be taken where you please?—And what, pray, is to become of the horses you left at Mr. Lenorme's?"

Malcolm was glad of a question he was prepared to answer.

"They are in their own stalls by this time, my lady. I took care of that."

"Then it was all a trick to carry me off against my will!" she cried, with growing indignation.

"Hardly against your will, my lady," said Malcolm, embarrassed and thoughtful, in a tone deprecating and apologetic.

"Utterly against my will!" insisted Florimel. "Could I ever have consented to go to sea with a boatful of men, and not a woman on board? You have disgraced me, Malcolm."

Between anger and annoyance she was on the point of crying.

"It's not so bad as that, my lady.—Here, Rose!"

At his word, Rose appeared.

"I've brought one of Lady Bellair's maids for your service, my lady," Malcolm went on. "She will do the best she can to wait on you."

Florimel gave her a look.

"I don't remember you," she said.

"No, my lady. I was in the kitchen."

"Then you can't be of much use to me."

"A willing heart goes a long way, my lady," said Rose prettily.

"That is true," returned Florimel, rather pleased. "Can you get me some tea?"

"Yes, my lady."

Florimel turned, and, much to Malcolm's content vouchsafing him not a word more, went below.

Presently a little silver lamp appeared in the

roof of the cabin, and in a few minutes Davy came, carrying the tea-tray, and followed by Rose with the teapot. As soon as they were alone, Florimel began to question Rose; but the girl soon satisfied her that she knew little or nothing. When Florimel pressed her how she could go she knew not where at the desire of a fellow-servant, she gave such confused and apparently contradictory answers, that Florimel began to think ill of both her and Malcolm, and to feel yet more uncomfortable and indignant; and the more she dwelt upon Malcolm's presumption, and speculated as to his possible design in it, she grew the angrier.

She went again on deck. By this time she was in a passion—little mollified by the sense of her helplessness.

"MacPhail," she said, laying the restraint of dignified utterance upon her words, "I desire you to give me a good reason for your most unaccountable behaviour. Where are you taking me?"

"To Lossie House, my lady."

"Indeed!" she returned with scornful and contemptuous surprise. "Then I order you to

change your course at once and return to London."

"I cannot, my lady."

"*Cannot!* Whose orders but mine are you under, pray?"

"Your father's, my lady."

"I have heard more than enough of that unfortunate—statement, and the measureless assumptions founded on it. I shall heed it no longer."

"I am only doing my best to take care of you, my lady, as I promised *him*. You will know it one day if you will but trust me."

"I have trusted you ten times too much, and have gained nothing in return but reasons for repenting it. Like all other servants made too much of, you have grown insolent. But I shall put a stop to it. I cannot possibly keep you in my service after this. Am I to pay a master where I want a servant?"

Malcolm was silent.

"You must have some reason for this strange conduct," she went on. "How can your supposed duty to my father justify you in treating me with such disrespect? Let me know your

reasons. I have a right to know them."

"I will answer you, my lady," said Malcolm. "—Davy, go forward; I will take the helm.—Now, my lady, if you will sit on that cushion.—Rose, bring my lady a fur-cloak you will find in the cabin.—Now, my lady, if you will speak low that neither Davy nor Rose shall hear us—Travers is deaf—I will answer you."

"I ask you," said Florimel, "why you have dared to bring me away like this. Nothing but some danger threatening me could justify it."

"There you say it, my lady."

"And what is the danger, pray?"

"You were going on the continent with Lady Bellair and Lord Liftore—and without me to do as I had promised."

"You insult me!" cried Florimel. "Are my movements to be subject to the approbation of my groom? Is it possible my father could give his henchman such authority over his daughter? I ask again, where was the danger?"

"In your company, my lady."

"So!" exclaimed Florimel, attempting to rise in sarcasm as she rose in wrath, lest she should

fall into undignified rage. "And what may be your objection to my companions?"

"That Lady Bellair is not respected in any circle where her history is known; and that her nephew is a scoundrel."

"It but adds to the wrong you heap on me, that you compel me to hear such wicked abuse of my father's friends," said Florimel, struggling with tears of anger. But for regard to her dignity she would have broken out in fierce and voluble rage.

"If your father knew Lord Liftore as I do, he would be the last man my lord marquis would see in your company."

"Because he gave you a beating, you have no right to slander him," said Florimel spitefully.

Malcolm laughed. He must either laugh or be angry.

"May I ask how your ladyship came to hear of that?"

"He told me himself," she answered.

"Then, my lady, he is a liar, as well as worse. It was I who gave *him* the drubbing he deserved for his insolence to my—mistress. I am sorry

to mention the disagreeable fact, but it is absolutely necessary you should know what sort of man he is."

"And, if there be a lie, which of the two is the more likely to tell it?"

"That question is for you, my lady, to answer."

"I never knew a servant who would not tell a lie," said Florimel.

"I was brought up a fisherman," said Malcolm.

"And," Florimel went on, "I have heard my father say no gentleman ever told a lie."

"Then Lord Liftore is no gentleman," said Malcolm. "But I am not going to plead my own cause even to you, my lady. If you can doubt me, do. I have only one thing more to say:—that when I told you and my Lady Clementina about the fisher-girl and the gentleman——"

"How dare you refer to that again? Even you ought to know there are things a lady cannot hear. It is enough you affronted me with that before Lady Clementina—and after foolish boasts on my part of your good breeding! Now

you bring it up again, when I cannot escape your low talk!"

"My lady, I am sorrier than you can think; but which is worse—that you should hear such a thing spoken of, or make a friend of the man who did it—and that is Lord Liftore?"

Florimel turned away, and gave her seeming attention to the moonlit waters, sweeping past the swift-sailing cutter. Malcolm's heart ached for her: he thought she was deeply troubled. But she was not half so shocked as he imagined. Infinitely worse would have been the shock to him could he have seen how little the charge against Liftore had touched her. Alas! evil communications had already in no small degree corrupted her good manners. Lady Bellair had uttered no bad words in her hearing; had softened to decency every story that required it; had not unfrequently tacked a worldly-wise moral to the end of one; and yet, and yet, such had been the tone of her telling, such the allotment of laughter and lamentation, such the acceptance of things as necessary, and such the repudiation of things as Quixotic, puritanical, impossible, that the girl's natural notions of the

lovely and the clean had got dismally shaken and confused. Happily it was as yet more her judgment than her heart that was perverted. But had she spoken out what was in her thoughts as she looked over the great wallowing water, she would have merely said that for all that Liftore was no worse than other men. They were all the same. It was very unpleasant; but how could a lady help it? If men would behave so, were by nature like that, women must not make themselves miserable about it. They need ask no questions. They were not supposed to be acquainted with the least fragment of the facts, and they must cleave to their ignorance, and lay what blame there might be on the women concerned. The thing was too indecent even to think about. Ostrich-like they must hide their heads—close their eyes and take the vice in their arms—to love, honour, and obey, as if it were virtue's self, and men as pure as their demands on their wives.

There are thousands that virtually reason thus: Only ignore the thing effectually, and for you it is not. Lie right thoroughly to yourself, and the thing is gone. The lie destroys the

fact. So reasoned Lady Macbeth—until conscience at last awoke, and she could no longer keep even the smell of the blood from her. What needed Lady Lossie care about the fisher-girl, or any other concerned with his past, so long as he behaved like a gentleman to her! Malcolm was a foolish meddling fellow, whose interference was the more troublesome that it was honest.

She stood thus gazing on the waters that heaved and swept astern, but without knowing that she saw them, her mind full of such nebulous matter as, condensed, would have made such thoughts as I have set down. And still and ever the water rolled and tossed away behind in the moonlight.

"Oh, my lady!" said Malcolm, "what it would be to have a soul as big and as clean as all this!"

She made no reply, did not turn her head, or acknowledge that she heard him. A few minutes more she stood, then went below in silence, and Malcolm saw no more of her that night.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOPE CHAPEL.

IT was Sunday, during which Malcolm lay at the point of death some three stories above his sister's room. There, in the morning, while he was at the worst, she was talking with Clementina, who had called to see whether she would not go and hear the preacher of whom he had spoken with such fervour.

Florimel laughed.

"You seem to take everything for gospel Malcolm says, Clementina!"

"Certainly not," returned Clementina, rather annoyed. "Gospel now-a-days is what nobody disputes and nobody heeds; but I do heed what Malcolm says, and intend to find out, if I *can*, whether there is any reality in it. I thought you had a high opinion of your groom!"

"I would take his word for anything a man's word can be taken for," said Florimel.

"But you don't set much store by his judgment?"

"Oh, I daresay he's right. But I don't care for the things you like so much to talk with him about. He's a sort of poet, anyhow, and poets must be absurd. They are always either dreaming or talking about their dreams. They care nothing for the realities of life. No—if you want advice, you must go to your lawyer or clergyman, or some man of common sense, neither groom nor poet."

"Then, Florimel, it comes to this—that this groom of yours is one of the truest of men, and one who possessed your father's confidence, but you are so much his superior that you are capable of judging him, and justified in despising his judgment."

"Only in practical matters, Clementina."

"And duty towards God is with you such a practical matter that you cannot listen to anything he has got to say about it."

Florimel shrugged her shoulders.

"For my part, I would give all I have to

know there was a God worth believing in."

"Clementina!"

"What?"

"Of course there is a God. It is very horrible to deny it."

"Which is worse—to deny *it*, or to deny *him?* Now, I confess to doubting *it*—that is, the fact of a God; but you seem to me to deny God himself, for you admit there is a God—think it very wicked to deny that, and yet you don't take interest enough in him to wish to learn anything about him. You won't *think*, Florimel. I don't fancy you ever really *think*."

Florimel again laughed.

"I am glad," she said, "that you don't judge me *incapable* of that high art. But it is not so very long since Malcolm used to hint something much the same about yourself, my lady!"

"Then he was quite right," returned Clementina. "I am only just beginning to think, and if I can find a teacher, here I am, his pupil."

"Well, I suppose I can spare my groom quite enough to teach you all he knows," Flori-

mel said, with what Clementina took for a marked absence of expression. She reddened. But she was not one to defend herself before her principles.

"If he can, why should he not?" she said. "But it was of his friend Mr. Graham I was thinking—not himself."

"You cannot tell whether he has got anything to teach you."

"Your groom's testimony gives likelihood enough to make it my duty to go and see. I intend to find the place this evening."

"It must be some little ranting methodist conventicle! He would not be allowed to preach in a church, you know."

"Of course not! The church of England is like the apostle that forbade the man casting out devils, and got forbid himself for it—with this difference, that she won't be forbid. Well, she chooses her portion with Dives and not Lazarus. She is the most arrant respecter of persons I know, and her Christianity is worse than a farce. It was that first of all that drove me to doubt. If I could find a place where everything was just the opposite, the poorer it

was the better I should like it. It makes me feel quite wicked to hear a smug parson reading the gold ring and the goodly apparel, while the pew-openers beneath are illustrating in dumb show the very thing the apostle is pouring out the vial of his indignation upon over their heads;—doing it calmly and without a suspicion, for the parson, while he reads, is rejoicing in his heart over the increasing aristocracy of his congregation. The farce is fit to make a devil in torment laugh."

Once more, Florimel laughed aloud.

"Another revolution, Clementina, and we shall have you heading the canaille to destroy Westminster Abbey."

"I would follow any leader to destroy falsehood," said Clementina. "No canaille will take that up until it meddles with their stomachs or their pew-rents."

"Really, Clementina, you are the worst Jacobin I ever heard talk. My groom is quite an aristocrat beside you."

"Not an atom more than I am. I do acknowledge an aristocracy—but it is one neither of birth nor of intellect nor of wealth."

"What is there besides to make one?"

"Something I hope to find before long. What if there be indeed a kingdom and an aristocracy of life and truth!—Will you or will you not go with me to hear this schoolmaster?"

"I will go anywhere with you, if it were only to be seen with such a beauty," said Florimel, throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her.

Clementina gently returned the embrace, and the thing was settled.

The sound of their wheels, pausing in swift revolution with the clangor of iron hoofs on rough stones at the door of the chapel, refreshed the diaconal heart like the sound of water in the desert. For the first time in the memory of the oldest, the day-spring of success seemed on the point of breaking over Hope Chapel. The ladies were ushered in by Mr. Marshal himself, to Clementina's disgust and Florimel's amusement, with much the same attention as his own shop-walker would have shown to carriage-customers.—How could a man who taught light and truth be found in such a mean *entourage?* But the setting was not the jewel.

A real stone *might* be found in a copper ring. So said Clementina to herself, as she sat waiting her hoped for instructor.

Mrs. Catanach settled her broad back into its corner, chuckling over her own wisdom and foresight. Her seat was at the pulpit end of the chapel, at right angles to almost all the rest of the pews, chosen because thence, if indeed she could not well see the preacher, she could get a good glimpse of nearly everyone that entered. Keen-sighted both physically and intellectually, she recognized Florimel the moment she saw her.

"Twa doos mair to the boody-craw!" she laughed to herself. "Ae man thrashin', an' twa birdies pickin'!" she went on, quoting the old nursery nonsense. Then she stooped, and let down her veil. Florimel hated her, and therefore might know her.

"It's the day o' the Lord wi' auld Sanny Grame!" she resumed to herself, as she lifted her head. "He's stickit nae mair, but a chosen trumpet at last! Foul fa' 'im for a wearifu' cratur for a' that! He has nowther balm o' grace nor pith o' damnation. Yon laad Flemin',

'at preached i' the Baillies' Barn aboot the dowgs gaein' roon' an' roon' the wa's o' the New Jeroozlem, gien he had but hauden thegither an' no gane to the worms sae sune, wad hae dung a score o' 'im. But Sanny angers me to that degree 'at but for rizons—like yon twa—I wad gang oot i' the mids o' ane o' 's palahvers, an' never come back, though I ha'e a haill quarter o' my sittin' to sit oot yet, an' it cost me dear, an' fits the auld back o' me no that ill."

When Mr. Graham rose to read the psalm, great was Clementina's disappointment: he looked altogether, as she thought, of a sort with the place—mean and dreary—of the chapel very chapelly, and she did not believe it could be the man of whom Malcolm had spoken. By a strange coincidence however, a kind of occurrence as frequent as strange, he read for his text that same passage about the gold ring and the vile raiment, in which we learn how exactly the behaviour of the early Jewish churches corresponded to that of the later English ones, and Clementina soon began to alter her involuntary judgment of him when

she found herself listening to an utterance beside which her most voluble indignation would have been but as the babble of a child. Sweeping, incisive, withering, blasting denunciation, logic and poetry combining in one torrent of genuine eloquence, poured confusion and dismay upon head and heart of all who set themselves up for pillars of the church without practising the first principles of the doctrine of Christ—men who, professing to gather their fellows together in the name of Christ, conducted the affairs of the church on the principles of hell—men so blind and dull and slow of heart, that they would never know what the outer darkness meant until it had closed around them —men who paid court to the rich for their money, and to the poor for their numbers—men who sought gain first, safety next, and the will of God not at all—men whose presentation of Christianity was enough to drive the world to a preferable infidelity.

Clementina listened with her very soul. All doubt as to whether this was Malcolm's friend, vanished within two minutes of his commencement. If she rejoiced a little more than was

humble or healthful in finding that such a man thought as she thought, she gained this good notwithstanding—the presence and power of a man who believed in righteousness the doctrine he taught. Also she perceived that the principles of equality he held, were founded on the infinite possibilities of the individual—and of the race only through the individual; and that he held these principles with an absoluteness, an earnestness, a simplicity, that dwarfed her loudest objurgation to the uneasy murmuring of a sleeper. She could not but trust him, and her hope grew great that perhaps for her he held the key of the kingdom of heaven. She saw that if what this man said was true, then the gospel was represented by men who knew nothing of its real nature, and by such she had been led into a false judgment of it. "If such a man," said the schoolmaster in conclusion, "would but once represent to himself that the man whom he regards as beneath him, *may* nevertheless be immeasurably above him—and that after no arbitrary judgment, but according to the absolute facts of creation, the scale of the kingdom of God, in which *being* is rank; if

he could persuade himself of the possibility that he may yet have to worship before the feet of those on whom he looks down as on the creatures of another and meaner order of creation, would it not sting him to rise, and, lest this should be one of such, make offer of his chair to the poor man in the vile raiment? Would he ever more, all his life long, dare to say, 'Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool?'"

During the week that followed, Clementina reflected with growing delight on what she had heard, and looked forward to hearing more of a kind correspondent on the approaching Sunday. Nor did the shock of the disappearance of Florimel with Malcolm abate her desire to be taught by Malcolm's friend.

Lady Bellair was astounded, mortified, enraged. Liftore turned grey with passion, then livid with mortification, at the news. Not one of all their circle, as Florimel had herself foreseen, doubted for a moment that she had run away with that groom of hers. Indeed, upon examination it became evident that the scheme had been for some time in hand: the yacht they

had gone on board had been lying there for months; and although she was her own mistress, and might marry whom she pleased, it was no wonder she had run away, for how could she have held her face to it, or up after it?

Lady Clementina accepted the general conclusion, but judged it individually. She had more reason to be distressed at what seemed to have taken place than anyone else; indeed it stung her to the heart, wounding her worse than in its first stunning effects she was able to know; yet she thought better rather than worse of Florimel because of it. What she did not like in her with reference to the affair was the depreciatory manner in which she had always spoken of Malcolm. If genuine, it was quite inconsistent with due regard for the man for whom she was yet prepared to sacrifice so much; if, on the other hand, her slight opinion of his judgment was a pretence, then she had been disloyal to the just prerogatives of friendship.

The latter part of that week was the sorest time Clementina had ever passed. But, like a true woman, she fought her own misery and sense of loss, as well as her annoyance and

anxiety, constantly saying to herself that, be the thing as it might, she could never cease to be glad that she had known Malcolm MacPhail.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A NEW PUPIL.

THE sermon Lady Clementina heard with such delight had followed one levelled at the common and right worldly idea of success harboured by each, and unquestioned by one of the chief men of the community: together they caused a strange uncertain sense of discomfort in the mind diaconal. Slow to perceive that that idea, nauseous in his presentment of it, was the very same cherished and justified by themselves; unwilling also to believe that in his denunciation of respecters of persons they themselves had a full share, they yet felt a little uneasy from the vague whispers of their consciences on the side of the neglected principles enounced, clashing with the less vague conviction that if those whispers were encouraged

and listened to, the ruin of their hopes for their chapel, and their influence in connection with it, must follow. They eyed each other doubtfully, and there appeared a general tendency amongst them to close-pressed lips and single shakes of the head. But there were other forces at work—tending in the same direction.

Whatever may have been the influence of the schoolmaster upon the congregation gathered in Hope Chapel, there was one on whom his converse, supplemented by his preaching, had taken genuine hold. Frederick Marshal had begun to open his eyes to the fact that, regarded as a profession, the ministry, as they called it in their communion, was the meanest way of making a living in the whole creation, one deserving the contempt of every man honest enough to give honourable work, that is, work worth the money, for the money paid him. Also he had a glimmering insight, on the other hand, into the truth of what the dominie said—that it was the noblest of martyrdoms to the man who, sent by God, loved the truth with his whole soul, and was never happier than when bearing witness of it, except, indeed, in those blessed moments

when receiving it of the Father. In consequence of this opening of his eyes the youth recoiled with dismay from the sacrilegious mockery of which he had been guilty in meditating the presumption of teaching holy things of which the sole sign that he knew anything was now afforded by this same recoil. At last he was not far from the kingdom of heaven, though whether he was to be sent to persuade men that that kingdom was amongst them, and must be in them, remained a question.

On the morning after the latter of those two sermons, Frederick, as they sat at breakfast, succeeded, with no small effort, for he feared his mother, in blurting out to his father the request that he might be taken into the counting-house; and when indignantly requested, over the top of the teapot, to explain himself, declared that he found it impossible to give his mind to a course of education which could only end in the disappointment of his parents, seeing he was at length satisfied that he had no call to the ministry. His father was not displeased at the thought of having him at the shop; but his mother was for some moments

speechless with angry tribulation. Recovering herself, with scornful bitterness she requested to know to what tempter he had been giving ear —for tempted he must have been ere son of hers would have been guilty of backsliding from *the cause*, of taking his hand from the plough and looking behind him. The youth returned such answers as, while they satisfied his father he was right, served only to convince his mother, where yet conviction was hardly needed, that she had to thank the dominie for his defection, his apostasy from the church to the world.

Incapable of perceiving that now first there was hope of a genuine disciple in the child of her affection, she was filled with the gall of disappointment, and with spite against the man who had taught her son how worse than foolish it is to aspire to teach before one has learned; nor did she fail to cast scathing reflections on her husband, in that he had brought home a viper in his bosom, a wolf into his fold, the wretched minion of a worldly church to lead her son away captive at his will; and partly no doubt from his last uncomfortable sermons, but mainly from the play of Mrs. Marshal's tongue

on her husband's tympanum, the deacons in full conclave agreed that no further renewal of the invitation to preach "for them" should be made to the schoolmaster—just the end of the business Mr. Graham had expected, and for which he had provided. On Tuesday morning he smiled to himself, and wondered whether, if he were to preach in his own schoolroom the next Sunday evening, anyone would come to hear him. On Saturday he received a cool letter of thanks for his services, written by the ironmonger in the name of the deacons, enclosing a cheque, tolerably liberal as ideas went, in acknowledgment of them. The cheque Mr. Graham returned, saying that, as he was not a preacher by profession, he had no right to take fees. It was a half-holiday: he walked up to Hampstead Heath, and was paid for everything, in sky and cloud, fresh air, and a glorious sunset.

When the end of her troubled week came, and the Sunday of her expectation brought lovely weather, with a certain vague suspicion of peace, into the regions of Mayfair and Spitalfields, Clementina walked across the Regent's

Park to Hope Chapel, and its morning observances; but thought herself poorly repaid for her exertions by having to listen to a dreadful sermon and worse prayers from Mr. Masquar—one of the chief priests of Commonplace—a comfortable idol to serve, seeing he accepts as homage to himself all that any man offers to his own person, opinions, or history. But Clementina contrived to endure it, comforting herself that she had made a mistake in supposing Mr. Graham preached in the morning.

In the evening her carriage once again drew up with clang and clatter at the door of the chapel. But her coachman was out of temper at having to leave the bosom of his family circle—as he styled the table that upheld his pot of beer and jar of tobacco—of a Sunday, and sought relief to his feelings in giving his horses a lesson in crawling; the result of which was fortunate for his mistress: when she entered, the obnoxious Mr. Masquar was already reading the hymn. She turned at once and made for the door.

But her carriage was already gone. A strange sense of loneliness and desolation

seized her. The place had grown hateful to her, and she would have fled from it. Yet she lingered in the porch. The eyes of the man in the pulpit, with his face of false solemnity and low importance—she seemed to feel the look of them on her back, yet she lingered. Now that Malcolm was gone, how was she to learn when Mr. Graham would be preaching?

"If you please, ma'am," said a humble and dejected voice.

She turned and saw the seamed and smoky face of the pew-opener, who had been watching her from the lobby, and had crept out after her. She dropped a courtesy, and went on hurriedly, with an anxious look now and then over her shoulder:

"Oh, ma'am! we shan't see *him* no more. Our people here—they're very good people, but they don't like to be told the truth. It seems to me as if they knowed it so well they thought as how there was no need for them to mind it."

"You don't mean that Mr. Graham has given up preaching here?"

"They've given up astin' of 'im to preach,

lady. But if ever there was a good man in that pulpit, Mr. Graham he do be that man!"

"Do you know where he lives?"

"Yes, ma'am; but it would be hard to direct you." Here she looked in at the door of the chapel with a curious half-frightened glance, as if to satisfy herself that the inner door was closed. "But," she went on, "they won't miss me now the service is begun, and I can be back before it's over. I'll show you where, ma'am."

"I should be greatly obliged to you," said Clementina, "only I am sorry to give you the trouble."

"To tell the truth, I'm only too glad to get away," she returned, "for the place it do look like a cementery, now *he's* out of it."

"Was he so kind to you?"

"He never spoke word to me, as to myself like, no, nor never give me sixpence, like Mr. Masquar do; but he give me strength in my heart to bear up, and that's better than meat or money."

It was a good half-hour's walk, and during it Clementina held what conversation she might with her companion. It was not much the

woman had to say of a general sort. She knew little beyond her own troubles and the help that met them, but what else are the two main forces whose composition results in upward motion? Her world was very limited—the houses in which she went charing, the chapel she swept and dusted, the neighbours with whom she gossipped, the little shops where she bought the barest needs of her bare life; but it was at least large enough to leave behind her; and if she was not one to take the kingdom of heaven by force, she was yet one to creep quietly into it. The earthly life of such as she—immeasurably less sordid than that of the poet who will not work for his daily bread, or that of the speculator who, having settled money on his wife, risks that of his neighbour—passing away like a cloud, will hang in their west, stained indeed, but with gold, blotted, but with roses. Dull as it all was now, Clementina yet gained from her unfoldings a new out-look upon life, its needs, its sorrows, its consolations, and its hopes; nor was there any vulgar pity in the smile of the one, or of degrading acknowledgment in the tears of the other, when a

piece of gold passed from hand to hand, as they parted.

The Sunday-sealed door of the stationer's shop—for there was no private entrance to the house—was opened by another sad-faced woman. What a place to seek the secret of life in! Love-lily enfolds the husk its kernel; but what the human eye turns from as squalid and unclean may enfold the seed that clasps, couched in infinite withdrawment, the vital germ of all that is lovely and graceful, harmonious and strong, all without which no poet would sing, no martyr burn, no king rule in righteousness, no geometrician pore over the marvellous *must*.

The woman led her through the counter into a little dingy room behind the shop, looking out on a yard a few feet square, with a water-but, half-a-dozen flower-pots, and a maimed plaster Cupid perched on the window-sill. There sat the schoolmaster, in conversation with a lady, whom the woman of the house, awed by her sternness and grandeur, had, out of regard to her lodger's feelings, shown into her parlour and not into his bedroom.

Cherishing the hope that the patent conse-

quences of his line of action might have already taught him moderation, Mrs. Marshal, instead of going to chapel to hear Mr. Masquar, had paid Mr. Graham a visit, with the object of enlisting his sympathies if she could, at all events his services, in the combating of the scruples he had himself aroused in the bosom of her son. What had passed between them I do not care to record, but when Lady Clementina—unannounced of the landlady—entered, there was light enough, notwithstanding the non-reflective properties of the water-but, to reveal Mrs. Marshal flushed and flashing, Mr. Graham grave and luminous, and to enable the chapel-business-eye of Mrs. Marshal, which saw every stranger that entered "Hope," at once to recognise her as having made one of the congregation the last Sunday evening. Evidently one of Mr. Graham's party, she was not prejudiced in her favour. But there was that in her manner which impressed her—that something ethereal and indescribable which she herself was constantly aping, and, almost involuntarily, she took upon herself such honours as the place, despicable in her eyes, would admit of. She

rose, made a sweeping courtesy, and addressed Lady Clementina with such a manner as people of Mrs. Marshal's ambitions put off and on like their clothes.

"Pray, take a seat, ma'am, such as it is," she said, with a wave of her hand. "I believe I have had the pleasure of seeing you at our place."

Lady Clementina sat down: the room was too small to stand in, and Mrs. Marshal seemed to take the half of it.

"I am not aware of the honour," she returned, doubtful what the woman meant—perhaps some shop or dress-maker's. Clementina was not one who delighted in freezing her humbler fellow-creatures, as we know; but there was something altogether repulsive in the would-be-grand but really arrogant behaviour of her fellow-visitor.

"I mean," said Mrs. Marshal, a little abashed, for ambition is not strength, "at our little Bethel in Kentish Town! Not that *we* live there!" she explained with a superior smile.

"Oh! I think I understand. You must mean the chapel where this gentleman was preaching."

"That *is* my meaning," assented Mrs. Marshal.

"I went there to-night," said Clementina, turning with some timidity to Mr. Graham. "That I did not find you there, sir, will, I hope, explain——" Here she paused, and turned again to Mrs. Marshal. "I see you think with me, ma'am, that a true teacher is worth following."

As she said this she turned once more to Mr. Graham, who sat listening with a queer, amused, but right courteous smile.

"I hope you will pardon me," she continued, "for venturing to call upon you, and, as I have the misfortune to find you occupied, allow me to call another day. If you would set me a time, I should be more obliged than I can tell you," she concluded, her voice trembling a little.

"Stay now, if you will, madam," returned the schoolmaster, with a bow of oldest-fashioned courtesy. "This lady has done laying her commands upon me, I believe."

"As you think proper to call them commands, Mr. Graham, I conclude you intend to obey

them," said Mrs. Marshal, with a forced smile and an attempt at pleasantry.

"Not for the world, madam," he answered. "Your son is acting the part of a gentleman—yes, I make bold to say, of one who is very nigh the kingdom of heaven, if not indeed within its gate, and before I would check him I would be burnt at the stake—even were your displeasure the fire, madam," he added, with a kindly bow. "Your son is a fine fellow."

"He would be, if he were left to himself. Good evening, Mr. Graham. Good-bye, rather, for I *think* we are not likely to meet again."

"In heaven, I hope, madam; for by that time we shall be able to understand each other," said the schoolmaster, still kindly.

Mrs. Marshal made no answer beyond a facial flash as she turned to Clementina.

"Good evening, ma'am," she said. "To pay court to the earthen vessel because of the treasure it may happen to hold, is to be a respecter of persons as bad as any."

An answering flash broke from Clementina's blue orbs, but her speech was more than calm as she returned,

"I learned something of that lesson last Sunday evening, I hope, ma'am. But you have left me far behind, for you seem to have learned disrespect even to the worthiest of persons. Good evening, ma'am."

She looked the angry matron full in the face, with an icy regard, from which, as from the Gorgon eye, she fled.

The victor turned to the schoolmaster.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, "for presuming to take your part, but a gentleman is helpless with a vulgar woman."

"I thank you, madam. I hope the sharpness of your rebuke——but indeed the poor woman can hardly help her rudeness, for she is very worldly, and believes herself very pious. It is the old story—hard for the rich."

Clementina was struck.

"I too am rich and worldly," she said. "But I know that I am not pious, and if you would but satisfy me that religion is common sense, I would try to be religious with all my heart and soul."

"I willingly undertake the task. But let us know each other a little first. And lest I should

afterwards seem to have taken an advantage of you, I hope you have no wish to be nameless to me, for my friend Malcolm MacPhail had so described you that I recognized your ladyship at once."

Clementina said that, on the contrary, she had given her name to the woman who opened the door.

"It is because of what Malcolm said of you that I ventured to come to you," she added.

"Have you seen Malcolm lately?" he asked, his brow clouding a little. "It is more than a week since he has been to me."

Thereupon, with embarrassment, such as she would never have felt except in the presence of pure simplicity, she told of his disappearance with his mistress.

"And you think they have run away together?" said the schoolmaster, his face beaming with what, to Clementina's surprise, looked almost like merriment.

"Yes, I think so," she answered. "Why not, if they choose?"

"I will say this for my friend Malcolm," returned Mr. Graham composedly, "that what-

ever he did I should expect to find not only all right in intention, but prudent and well-devised also. The present may well seem a rash, ill-considered affair for both of them, but——"

"I see no necessity either for explanation or excuse," said Clementina, too eager to mark that she interrupted Mr. Graham. "In making up her mind to marry him, Lady Lossie has shown greater wisdom and courage than, I confess, I had given her credit for."

"And Malcolm?" rejoined the schoolmaster softly. "Should you say of him that he showed equal wisdom?"

"I decline to give an opinion upon the gentleman's part in the business," answered Clementina, laughing, but glad there was so little light in the room, for she was painfully conscious of the burning of her cheeks. "Besides, I have no measure to apply to Malcolm," she went on, a little hurriedly. "He is like no one else I have ever talked with, and I confess there is something about him I cannot understand. Indeed, he is beyond me altogether."

"Perhaps, having known him from infancy, I might be able to explain him," returned Mr.

Graham, in a tone that invited questioning.

"Perhaps, then," said Clementina, "I may be permitted, in jealousy for the teaching I have received of him, to confess my bewilderment that one so young should be capable of dealing with such things as he delights in. The youth of the prophet makes me doubt his prophecy."

"At least," rejoined Mr. Graham, "the phenomenon coincides with what the master of these things said of them—that they were revealed to babes and not to the wise and prudent. As to Malcolm's wonderful facility in giving them form and utterance, that depends so immediately on the clear sight of them, that, granted a little of the gift poetic, developed through reading and talk, we need not wonder much at it."

"You consider your friend a genius?" suggested Clementina.

"I consider him possessed of a kind of heavenly common sense, equally at home in the truths of divine relation, and the facts of the human struggle with nature and her forces. I should never have discovered my own ignorance in certain points of the mathematics but for

the questions that boy put to me before he was twelve years of age. A thing not understood lay in his mind like a fretting foreign body. But there is a far more important factor concerned than this exceptional degree of insight. Understanding is the reward of obedience. Peter says 'the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given them that *obey* him.' Obedience is the key to every door. I am perplexed at the stupidity of the ordinary religious being. In the most practical of all matters, he will talk, and speculate, and try to feel, but he will not set himself to *do*. It is different with Malcolm. From the first he has been trying to obey. Nor do I see why it should be strange that even a child should understand these things, if they are the very elements of the region for which we were created and to which our being holds essential relations, as a bird to the air, or a fish to the sea. If a man may not understand the things of God whence he came, what shall he understand?"

"How, then, is it that so few do understand?"

"Because where they know, so few obey.

This boy, I say, did. If you had seen, as I have, the almost superhuman struggles of his will to master the fierce temper his ancestors gave him, you would marvel less at what he has so early become. I have seen him, white with passion, cast himself on his face on the shore, and cling with his hands to the earth as if in a paroxysm of bodily suffering; then after a few moments rise and do a service to the man who had wronged him. Were it any wonder if the light should have soon gone up in a soul like that? When I was a younger man I used to go out with the fishing-boats now and then, drawn chiefly by my love for the boy, who earned his own bread that way before he was in his teens. One night we were caught in a terrible storm, and had to stand out to sea in the pitch dark. He was then not fourteen. 'Can you let a boy like that steer?' I said to the captain of the boat. 'Yes; just a boy like that,' he answered. 'Ma'colm 'ill steer as straucht's a porpus.' When he was relieved, he crept over the thwarts to where I sat. '*Is* there any true definition of a straight line, sir?' he said. 'I can't take the one in my Euclid.'—

'So you're not afraid, Malcolm?' I returned, heedless of his question, for I wanted to see what he would answer. 'Afraid, sir!' he rejoined with some surprise, 'I wad ill like to hear the Lord say, *O thou o' little faith!*'—'But,' I persisted, 'God may mean to drown you!'—'An' what for no?' he returned. 'Gien ye war to tell me 'at I micht be droon't ohn him meant it, I wad be fleyt eneuch.' I see your ladyship does not understand: I will interpret the dark saying: 'And why should he not drown me? If you were to tell me I might be drowned without his meaning it, I should be frightened enough.' Believe me, my lady, the right way is simple to find, though only they that seek it *first* can find it. But I have allowed myself," concluded the schoolmaster, "to be carried adrift in my laudation of Malcolm. You did not come to hear praises of him, my lady."

"I owe him much," said Clementina. "—But tell me then, Mr. Graham, how is it that you know there is a God, and one—one—fit to be trusted as you trust him?"

"In no way that I can bring to bear on the reason of another so as to produce conviction."

"Then what is to become of me?"

"I can do for you what is far better. I can persuade you to look and see whether before your own door stands not a gate—lies not a path to walk in. Entering by that gate, walking in that path, you shall yourself arrive at the conviction, which no man can give you, that there is a living Love and Truth at the heart of your being, and pervading all that surrounds you. The man who seeks the truth in any other manner will never find it. Listen to me a moment, my lady. I loved that boy's mother. Naturally she did not love me—how could she? I was very unhappy. I sought comfort from the unknown source of my life. He gave me to understand his Son, and so I understood himself, knew that I came of God, and was comforted."

"But how do you know that it was not all a delusion—the product of your own fervid imagination? Do not mistake me: I want to find it true."

"It is a right and honest question, my lady. I will tell you. Not to mention the conviction which a truth beheld must carry with itself,

and concerning which there can be no argument either with him who does or him who does not see it, this experience goes far with me, and would with you if you had it, as you may—namely, that all my difficulties and confusions have gone on clearing themselves up ever since I set out to walk in that way. My consciousness of life is threefold what it was; my perception of what is lovely around me, and my delight in it, threefold; my power of understanding things and of ordering my way, threefold also; the same with my hope and my courage, my love to my kind, my power of forgiveness. In short, I cannot but believe that my whole being and its whole world are in process of rectification for me. Is not that something to set against the doubt born of the eye and ear, and the questions of an intellect that can neither grasp nor disprove? I say nothing of better things still. To the man who receives such as I mean, they are the heart of life; to the man who does not, they exist not. But I say—if I thus find my whole being enlightened and redeemed, and know that therein I fare according to the word of the man of whom the

old story tells; if I find that his word, and the result of action founded upon that word, correspond and agree, opening a heaven within and beyond me, in which I see myself delivered from all that now in myself is to myself despicable and unlovely; if I can reasonably—reasonably to myself, not to another—cherish hopes of a glory of conscious being, divinely better than all my imagination when most daring could invent—a glory springing from absolute unity with my creator, and therefore with my neighbour; if the Lord of the ancient tale, I say, has thus held word with me, am I likely to doubt much or long whether there be such a lord or no?"

"What, then, is the way that lies before my own door? Help me to see it."

"It is just the old way—as old as the conscience—that of obedience to any and every law of personal duty. But if you have ever seen the Lord, if only from afar—if you have any vaguest suspicion that the Jew Jesus, who professed to have come from God, was a better man than other men, one of your first duties must be to open your ears to his words, and

see whether they commend themselves to you as true; then, if they do, to obey them with your whole strength and might, upheld by the hope of the vision promised in them to the obedient. This is the way of life, which will lead a man out of the miseries of the nineteenth century, as it led Paul out of the miseries of the first."

There followed a little pause, and then a long talk about what the schoolmaster had called the old story; in which he spoke with such fervid delight of this and that point in the tale; removing this and that stumbling-block by giving the true reading or the right interpretation; showing the what and why and how—the very intent of our Lord in the thing he said or did, that, for the first time in her life, Clementina began to feel as if such a man must really have lived, that his blessed feet must really have walked over the acres of Palestine, that his human heart must indeed have thought and felt, worshipped and borne, right humanly. Even in the presence of her new teacher, and with his words in her ears, she began to desire her own chamber that she might sit down

with the neglected story and read for herself.

The schoolmaster walked with her to the chapel door. There her carriage was already waiting. He put her in, and, while the Reverend Jacob Masquar was still holding forth upon the difference between adoption and justification, Clementina drove away, never more to delight the hearts of the deacons with the noise of the hoofs of her horses, staying the wheels of her yellow chariot.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FEY FACTOR.

WHEN Mr. Crathie heard of the outrage the people of Scaurnose had committed upon the surveyors, he vowed he would empty every house in the place at Michaelmas. His wife warned him that such a wholesale proceeding must put him in the wrong with the country, seeing they could not *all* have been guilty. He replied it would be impossible, the rascals hung so together, to find out the ringleaders even. She returned that they all deserved it, and that a correct discrimination was of no consequence; it would be enough to the purpose if he made a difference. People would then say he had done his best to distinguish. The factor was persuaded and made out a list of those who were to leave, in which he took care to include

all the principal men, to whom he gave warning forthwith to quit their houses at Michaelmas. I do not know whether the notice was in law sufficient, but exception was not taken on that score.

Scaurnose, on the receipt of the papers, all at the same time, by the hand of the bellman of Portlossie, was like a hive about to swarm. Endless and complicated were the comings and goings between the houses, the dialogues, confabulations, and consultations, in the one street and its many closes. In the middle of it, in front of the little public-house, stood, all that day and the next, a group of men and women, for no five minutes in its component parts the same, but, like a cloud, ever slow-dissolving, and as continuously re-forming, some dropping away, others falling to. Such nid-nodding, such uplifting and fanning of palms among the women, such semi-revolving side-shakes of the head, such demonstration of fists, and such cursing among the men, had never before been seen and heard in Scaurnose. The result was a conclusion to make common cause with the first victim of the factor's tyranny, namely Blue

Peter, whose expulsion would arrive three months before theirs, and was unquestionably head and front of the same cruel scheme for putting down the fisher-folk altogether.

Three of them, therefore, repaired to Joseph's house, commissioned with the following proposal and condition of compact: that Joseph should defy the notice given him to quit, they pledging themselves that he should not be expelled. Whether he agreed or not, they were equally determined, they said, when their turn came, to defend the village; but if he would cast in his lot with them, they would, in defending him, gain the advantage of having the question settled three months sooner for themselves. Blue Peter sought to dissuade them, specially insisting on the danger of bloodshed. They laughed. They had anticipated objection, but being of the youngest and roughest in the place, the idea of a scrimmage was, neither in itself nor in its probable consequences, at all repulsive to them. They answered that a little blood-letting would do nobody any harm, neither would there be much of that, for they scorned to use any weapon sharper than their

fists or a good thick *rung:* the women and children would take stones of course. Nobody would be killed, but every meddlesome authority taught to let Scaurnose and fishers alone. Peter objected that their enemies could easily starve them out. Dubs rejoined that, if they took care to keep the sea-door open, their friends at Portlossie would not let them starve. Grosert said he made no doubt the factor would have the Seaton to fight as well as Scaurnose, for they must see plainly enough that their turn would come next. Joseph said the factor would apply to the magistrates, and they would call out the militia.

"An' we'll call out Buckie," answered Dubs.

"Man," said Fite Folp, the eldest of the three, "the haill shore, frae the Brough to Fort George, 'll be up in a jiffie, an' a' the cuintry, frae John o' Groat's to Berwick, 'ill hear hoo the fisher-fowk 's misguidit; an' at last it'll come to the king, an' *syne* we'll get oor richts, for he'll no stan' to see't, an' maitters 'll sune be set upon a better futtin' for puir fowk 'at has no freen' but God an' the sea."

The greatness of the result represented laid

hold of Peter's imagination, and the resistance to injustice necessary to reach it stirred the old tar in him. When they took their leave, he walked halfway up the street with them, and then returned to tell his wife what they had been saying, all the way murmuring to himself as he went, "The Lord is a man of war." And ever as he said the words, he saw as in a vision the great man-of-war in which he had served, sweeping across the bows of a Frenchman, and raking him, gun after gun, from stem to stern. Nor did the warlike mood abate until he reached home and looked his wife in the eyes. He told her all, ending with the half-repudiatory, half-tentative words,

"That's what they say, ye see, Annie."

"And what say ye, Joseph?" returned his wife.

"Ow! I'm no sayin'," he answered.

"What are ye thinkin' than, Joseph?" she pursued. "Ye canna say ye're no thinkin'."

"Na; I'll no say that, lass," he replied, but said no more.

"Weel, gien ye winna say," resumed Annie, "I wull; an' my say is, 'at it luiks to me unco like takin' things intil yer ain han'."

"An' whase han' sud we tak them intil but oor ain?" said Peter, with a falseness which in another would have roused his righteous indignation.

"That's no the p'int. It's whase han' ye're takin' them oot o'," returned she, and spoke with solemnity and significance.

Peter made no answer, but the words *Vengeance is mine* began to ring in his mental ears instead of *The Lord is a man of war.*

Before Mr. Graham left them, and while Peter's soul was flourishing, he would have simply said that it was their part to endure, and leave the rest to the God of the sparrows. But now the words of men whose judgment had no weight with him, threw him back upon the instinct of self-defence—driven from which by the words of his wife, he betook himself, not alas! to the protection, but to the vengeance of the Lord!

The next day he told the three commissioners that he was sorry to disappoint them, but he could not make common cause with them, for he could not see it his duty to resist, much as it would gratify the natural man. They must

therefore excuse him if he left Scaurnose at the time appointed. He hoped he should leave friends behind him.

They listened respectfully, showed no offence, and did not even attempt to argue the matter with him. But certain looks passed between them.

After this Blue Peter was a little happier in his mind, and went more briskly about his affairs.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

1632
310
vol. II

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